Catholic University of America Press

Chapter Title: Front Matter

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma
Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century
Book Author(s): John D. Cotts
Published by: Catholic University of America Press. (2009)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.1

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THE CLERICAL DILEMMA

Peter of Blois & Literate Culture in the Twelfth Century

John D. Cotts

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John D. Cotts

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Peter of Blois and Literate Culture in the Twelfth Century

The Catholic University of America Press
Washington, D.C.

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Cotts, John D.
The clerical dilemma : Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century / John D. Cotts.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-8132-1676-8 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Peter, of Blois, ca. 1135–ca. 1212.
2. Catholic Church—Europe—Clergy—History.
3. Europe—Intellectual life.
4. Twelfth century.
I. Title.
BX4705.P43475C68 2009
282'.409022—dc22 2009006909

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Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one:
Inconstancy unnaturally hath begot
A constant habit; that when I would not
I change in vows, and in devotion.
As humorous is my contrition
As my profane love, and as soon forgot:
As riddlingly distempered, cold and hot,
As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none.
I durst not view heaven yesterday; and today
In prayers and flattering speeches I court God:
Tomorrow I quake with true fear of his rod.
So my devout fits come and go away
Like a fantastic ague; save that here
Those are my best days, when I shake with fear.

—John Donne

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Chapter Title: Table of Contents

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma
Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century
Book Author(s): John D. Cotts
Published by: Catholic University of America Press. (2009)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.2

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Chapter Title: Acknowledgments

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma
Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century
Book Author(s): John D. Cotts
Published by: Catholic University of America Press. (2009)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.3

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Acknowledgments

This book is the product of over a decade of research, reflection, writing, rewriting, and professional development, and as a result my debts are many. I first must thank Marcia Colish, who through her unique combination of *gravitas* and passion, sparked my interest in medieval history at Oberlin College. She continues to provide an example of scholarship and teaching to which I will always aspire. I began studying twelfth-century thought and culture at the University of California, Berkeley, where the list of those who provided support and assistance would take up more space than I have here. Above all, thanks go to my graduate advisor, the late Gerard E. Caspary, who at all times showed intellectual generosity toward and interest in this book and its author. Also at Berkeley, the late Robert Brentano taught me how to lift up the corners of medieval texts and peer inside, Ralph Hexter immeasurably improved my translations of medieval Latin, and Geoffrey Koziol, more than anyone else, showed me by example what one must do to do history well.

It was Richard Sharpe who first suggested I work on Peter of Blois, and I gratefully acknowledge the suggestion here. Among my peers (and I use the term sheepishly), I especially thank Bill North and Jay Rubenstein for assisting me in all aspects of my career. Many others have made suggestions or provided opportunities for discussion about the High Middle Ages over the years, including Michael Clanchy, Robin Fleming, John Gillingham, Julian Harrison, Paul Hyams, Paul Kershaw, Chris Lewis, Jinty Nelson, Bruce O'Brien, David Spear, Ralph Turner, Sally Vaughn, Carl Watkins, and Grover Zinn. Nicholas Vincent and Hugh Thomas read the entire manuscript with heroic thoroughness—for any errors that remain I bear sole responsibility. I am also deeply grateful to David McGonagle of the Catholic University of America Press, for overseeing the metamorphosis of the manuscript into a book.

Portions of this book have been published previously, in somewhat primitive form. Parts of chapter 4 were published in *Anglo-Norman Studies,* vol. 27, and *Haskins Society Journal,* vol. 13, and snippets from chapter 5 appeared in *Haskins Society Journal,* vol. 10. The Boydell Press, publisher of

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both journals, kindly granted permission for this material to be reprinted here.

Various institutions have assisted the completion of this book, in various ways. I received financial support for research and travel from the Department of History and the Medieval Studies Program at Berkeley, from the Colorado College, and from Grinnell College, where the Office of Aademic Affairs provided funds for travel to London and Paris. The dean of faculty at Whitman College and the history department at the same institution also provided support for travel to the United Kingdom. In addition, I must thank the staffs of the Doe Library and the Graduate Theological Union Library in Berkeley, and the Green Library at Stanford University, for myriad forms of assistance. Across the Atlantic, the staffs of the Parker Library of Corpus Christi College and the University Library in Cambridge; the Duke Humphrey's Reading Room at the Bodleian Library in Oxford; Lambeth Palace Library, the British Library Manuscript Room, the Institute of Historical Research, and the Warburg Institute in London; and at the Salle de Lecteur of the Département des Manuscrits Occidentaux at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris provided invaluable services. Back in the United States, I have found welcoming environments in several academic homes, for which I thank Carol Neel and the history department at Colorado College, Marci Sortor and the history department at Grinnell College, and David Schmitz and the rest of my department at Whitman College.

I also owe a great deal to friends both inside and outside of academia. Those who cannot pass without mention include Paul Apostolidis, Julian Bourg, Jana Byars, Timothy Cheek, Laura Cruz, Dallas Denery, George Drake, Matthew Gerber, Doug Monroy, Jeanne Morefield, Sam Moyn, Kyra Nourse, Clementine Oliver, Tina Sessa, Don Smith, Lynn Sharp, and Max Withers. In California, a lifeline to the real world was provided by Monica Bouchier, Ryan Torres, and Lidia Wenczel. For tea, sympathy, and cocktails in the middle of the cornfields, I will always be thankful to Mary Burke, John Fennell, Jennifer Green, and Simone Sidwell. In Walla Walla, my academic bubble was magnificently shattered by Benjamin Boehm, Reggie Gonzales, Sarah Koenigsberg, Dave Laufenburg, and Julie Wallace.

Finally I must show my appreciation to my parents, Bill and Carol Cotts. They not only tolerated but encouraged my pursuit of an obscure field, and have never stopped cheering for the Little League game that is now my career. I dedicate this book to them, with admiration and affection.

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Chapter Title: Abbreviations and Short Titles in the Notes

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma
Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century
Book Author(s): John D. Cotts
Published by: Catholic University of America Press. (2009)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.4

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Carmina	*Petri Blesensis Carmina,* ed. C. Wollin. *CCCM* 128 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998)
CCCM	*Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*
EEA	*English Episcopal Acta*
Fasti	John Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066–1300*
Later Letters	Elizabeth Revell, ed. *The Later Letters of Peter of Blois,* Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi 13 (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1993)
MTB	*Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury,* 7 vols., ed. James Craigie Robinson (London, 1875–85)
PL	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Latina,* ed. J.-P. Migne
RS	Rolls Series
Robinson, "Peter of Blois"	James Armitage Robinson, "Peter of Blois," in *Somerset Historical Essays* (London, 1921), 100–140
Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?"	R.W. Southern, "Peter of Blois: A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" in *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 105–34
Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*	Lena Wahlgren, *The Letter Collections of Peter of Blois: Studies in the Manuscript Tradition,* Studia Graeca et Latina Gothoburgensia 58 (Goteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1993)

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Chapter Title: Introduction

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Book Author(s): John D. Cotts
Published by: Catholic University of America Press. (2009)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.5

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Introduction

The letter that begins Peter of Blois's letter collection may be an elegant fraud. Addressed to Henry II of England, it claims that the king himself asked Peter to compile the "letters I have written by and by to various persons" and "gather them into one little bundle."[1] Perhaps Henry sufficiently admired the archdeacon of Bath to request more than 100,000 words of his carefully wrought prose, but a man of Peter's energy and ambition hardly needed royal prodding to create a literary monument. Peter certainly inspires little confidence in his sincerity when he tells Henry that the letters, originally composed "in the tempestuous waves of the court," have been left "in their native rudeness."[2] He purports, that is, to offer his king a series of extemporaneous documents produced in the course of his work as a secular cleric. But the many extant manuscripts of this collection betray Peter on this point, for they suggest that he revised and polished his letters. As much as his style and interests vary from letter to letter, one is hard-pressed to find instances of rushed or tortured prose in his corpus, let alone any traces of unrefined style.

Peter had good reason to write carefully, for this dedicatory piece is about writing in the presence of royal power, power exercised, made known, and remembered through the written word. It makes perfect sense that it should be directed to one of medieval Europe's greatest champions of literate administration. Whatever the precise nature of Henry and Peter's relationship, the king provided the letter collection with its raison d'etre, both through his alleged request and his position as head of one of the most dynamic administrative networks of the day. Over the years, the contents of Peter's letter collection shifted: some letters dropped out, new ones

1. *Ep.* 1, *PL* 207, 1.
2. Ibid.

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were added, and some were substantially rewritten, but neither these alterations nor the king's own death in 1189 displaced Henry's name from its privileged position at the head of the collection. British Library manuscript Royal 8F xvii, even as its marginal additions and variant readings reflect changes Peter made in the 1190s, begins with a bold *Henrico*, its capital H rendered in brilliant blue, red, and gold.

Having dispensed with conventional modesty and endowed his undertaking with a royal imprimatur, however, Peter accurately predicts the instability of the text he produced:

> Your eminence, I think, knows well that almost all my letters hung upon another's judgment, and it was sometimes necessary for me to write rather inelegantly on account of the urgent necessity of emerging events, sometimes briefly on account of the thinness of the material, and sometimes rudely, diffusely or plainly on account of the limitations of the people to whom they were written, or of those who were doing the writing.[3]

A writer with such constraints may not prove the most reliable witness to the things from which one would construct history. In one sentence Peter calls attention to the vagaries of inspiration, the pressures on a writer involved in pressing business, the need to write for an audience, and the unreliability of scribes. His admission that his letters "hung upon another's judgment" *(de alieno pendebant arbitrio)* is particularly striking. Writing and collecting letters was, for Peter, anything but an easy reminiscing of the events germane to a cleric. In fact, despite his possibly disingenuous claims of rusticity and of royal enthusiasm for his writings, he managed to anticipate many of the modern historian's anxieties about sources steeped in conventional sentiment and half-truths, while calling attention to the unpleasantness experienced by a midlevel ecclesiastical clerk. He testified, based on immediate experience, to the tumultuous nature of clerical life during the period when the written word, and those versed in it, took on a new importance in European political life. The explosion of literacy and changes in outlook that it occasioned has been well documented.[4] Men like Peter, secular clerics who produced

3. Ibid., 2.

4. See especially M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford and Cambridge, U.K.: Blackwell, 1993); and Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987). For ways in which learned clerks like Peter in England experienced these changes, see Nicholas Vincent, "Why 1199? Bureaucracy and Enrollment under John and His Contemporaries," in *English Government in the Thirteenth Century*, ed. Adrian Johnson (Woodbridge and London: Boydell Press and National Archives, 2004), 17–48.

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Europe's documents and administered its sacramental system, served as the shock troops of this transformation, and in so doing energized the cultural flowering, bureaucratic reorganization, and spiritual awakening associated with the long twelfth century.[5]

Even a brief account of his career can demonstrate his total immersion in this clerical culture.[6] Born around 1130, Peter would experience, in a life that touched nine decades, all that the world of the secular clergy could offer, except, perhaps, for a bishopric. When he collected his letters for Henry II (and anyone else who may have been interested) in the 1180s, he had long since studied the liberal arts at Tours and at Paris, such law as he could stomach at Bologna, and theology back at Paris. As a young clerk he had (he claimed) been abducted by an antipope's henchmen, and a few years later tutored the boy king William II of Sicily before fleeing a palace revolt in Palermo. Turning his attention to the realms of the Angevin kings of England, he corresponded with both sides of the Becket dispute in 1170 and then served in the households of Archbishop Thomas's successors at Canterbury. When he dedicated his letters to Henry in 1184, he had more than enough material to fascinate any number of audiences. Still, in the remaining twenty-seven years of his life, Peter remained productive and continued writing letters, treatises, and sermons, essentially doubling the size of his corpus. In the following centuries these works, especially the letters, took on a life of their own.

The character that emerges from this massive body of work, however, is elusive and contradictory, and so frustrates the historian who would seek hard-and-fast conclusions about his idiosyncrasies, convictions, and

5. These historiographical concerns are discussed in such foundational texts as Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927); Joseph R. Strayer, *Medieval Statecraft and the Perspective of History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971); Herbert Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter,* 2nd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1961), translated as *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism,* trans. Steven Rowan (South Bend, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1995); and Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

6. Basic recent biographies of Peter of Blois can be found in Egbert Türk, *Pierre de Blois: Ambitions et remords sous les Plantagenêts* (Turnhout: Brepols 2006) and *Nugae curialium: Le règne d'Henri II Plantagenêt (1145–1189) et l'éthique politique* (Geneva: Libraire Droz, 1977); R. W. Southern, "Peter of Blois," in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* ed. H. G. C. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 6:242–47, and *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe, Vol. 2: The Heroic Age* (Oxford and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2001), 178–218; and Rolf Köhn, "Pierre de Blois," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (Paris, 1985), 13:1510–17.

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influences. Peter's works form not a straightforward account of a clerical life but an uncommonly challenging excursion through the cultural and intellectual currents of the twelfth-century Church, marked by periodic changes of outlook and reliance on a number of distinct spiritual and literary traditions. The profound difficulty of his writings as historical sources stems not only from the challenges presented by their manuscript tradition, but also from their tendency to self-contradiction. In addition, the letters confront a varied assortment of professional and spiritual options, which are in part responsible for the shifting and often divided personality they present. That personality hides in the shadows cast by protestations of humility, bitter disappointment, and moral arrogance. All these attributes render the collection a better source for Peter's thought world than for the facts of his itinerary.

Nevertheless, through his very shiftiness, demonstrated by frequent attempts to adapt ideals to troublesome professional situations, Peter's writings show how a trained and sensitive observer could participate in the institutional, spiritual, and intellectual dynamism of the High Middle Ages. Many of his dilemmas were not new. The tensions between the schools and the world, the classical and the Christian, the cleric and the court, had persisted through much of the previous millennium of ecclesiastical history. In the twelfth century, however, the stakes were higher, for the European cleric was in the process of taking on a new significance in the way European society was organized. Peter of Blois witnessed the birth pangs of a vigorous literate and sacramental culture.

Peter's reliability as a witness has been called into question because he usually speaks to the present through a uniquely challenging medium, namely, the letter collection.[7] In Peter's hands the letter collection became a truly slippery source. The dedicatory letter considered above, with its spiritual arrogance and occasional condescension toward Henry II, may itself have reflected ecclesiastical wishful thinking more than historical reality. But his collection was popular. It survives in over three hundred manuscripts spread all over Europe. Countless variant readings plague individual letters and the manuscripts themselves can be categorized (based on content, letter order, and variant readings) into nearly a dozen classes. The sheer number and geographical distribution of the manuscripts suggest a popular author, and Peter's popularity only increased as time passed.[8] Medieval scribes expressed their admiration at his piety in

7. Early objections to the authenticity of Peter's letters are summarized in E. S. Cohn, "The Manuscript Evidence for the Letters of Peter of Blois," *English Historical Review* 41 (1926): 43–60.

8. Giles Constable, "The Popularity of Twelfth-Century Writers in the Late Middle Ages,"

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their marginalia, and during the Quattrocento Aeneas Silvius, though less effusive, acknowledged his stylistic flair.[9] Yet Peter offered that century more than measured rhythms and artfully structured sentences: he clearly appealed to religious sensibilities as well. Manuscripts were produced frequently in late medieval Germany, and in 1480, seemingly as soon as the Brothers of the Common Life had acquired a printing press, the order that educated Erasmus set a selection of the letters in type at Brussels. Fuller editions followed in Paris (1519) and Mainz (1600). In 1667, Pierre de Goussainville published a large edition including a good deal of *spuria*, again in Paris. By this time, however, Peter's popularity had begun to decline, and nearly two hundred years passed before another editor, J. A. Giles, produced an edition which, along with that of Goussainville (from which Giles borrowed liberally), provided an easy target for appropriation into J.-P. Migne's *Patrologiae cursus completus series Latina* in 1855.[10]

Peter and the Historians

The early attention given Peter's writings may have worked, in the long term, to the detriment of his reputation. Enthusiastic editors introduced spurious letters and treatises into the corpus, including works now known to be by contemporaries such as William de Montibus and Peter of Waltham.[11] Moreover, their editions conflated variant readings of some letters, occasionally obscuring the evidence of Peter's own editorial work. As a result, the entire corpus became for some a tainted source, and this, combined with some of the unattractive features of his personality (his unrelenting ambition, his tendency to grovel shamelessly), caused his reputation to plummet in the nineteenth century. In the first *Dictionary of National Biography* he appeared as "a man full of literary vanity, ambitious for worldly advancement, and discontented with his station, which he thought unequal to his merits."[12]

Still, as much as he frustrated them, scholars could not ignore Peter:

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in *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Hans Baron*, ed. Anthony Molho and John A. Tedeschi (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1971), 8, 28.

9. *Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini*, ed. Rudolf Wolkan (Vienna: A. Hölder, 1909–1918), 1:329.

10. This publication history will be discussed below, in chapter 2 and the appendix.

11. Richard Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540*, Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 418–23.

12. C. L. Kingsford, "Peter of Blois," in *The Dictionary of National Biography* (London, 1896), 46:49.

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his letter collection is at once so close to and yet so far from being a truly helpful source. He passed through the court of Henry II, wrote about the Becket affair, and played an important role in the Canterbury curia, but his letters ultimately disappoint fact-seekers. Although his career intertwined with major themes of English ecclesiastical and constitutional history, his texts never engage them quite as explicitly as Victorian commentators might have liked. Bishop Stubbs undoubtedly had Peter in mind when he lamented the lack of "news" in twelfth-century letters.[13]

The judgments that Aeneas Silvius, the Brethren of the Common Life, and the Victorians passed on Peter reverberate in twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship, which has tended to present him in one of three guises: as an early "humanist," as a spiritual thinker, or as a participant in political and courtly culture. In such guises, Peter can illustrate any number of sweeping arguments concerning his century.[14] These distinct lenses of interpretation depend heavily on the question many have asked about this vain and irascible character: What accounts for his incredible popularity in the later Middle Ages? Those who see Peter primarily as a writer and gifted Latin stylist (which makes him relevant to most definitions of "humanist" that are pertinent to the twelfth century) claim that the appeal of Peter's letters lay in their value as literary models. Sir Richard Southern, for example, wrote that "the collection was successful because it provided models of fine writing in all the recognized modes."[15] Giles Constable and his student the late Ethel Higonnet, on the other hand, saw religious enthusiasm motivating the fervent reception and copying of the letter collection in the centuries after its compilation.[16] It is not clear whether late medieval scribes, let alone Peter himself, would have recognized such a clear distinction.

The humanist Peter, insofar as he demonstrated an accomplished Latin style and passed through some of the most important medieval schools,

13. William Stubbs, *Seventeen Lectures on the Study of Medieval and Modern History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), 146.

14. Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050–1200* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972; reprint, Toronto: University of Toronto Press in Association with the Medieval Academy of America, 1987), 8; Joachim Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 8; Jacques Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Cambridge, Mass., and Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 10; and Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 18.

15. R. W. Southern, "Peter of Blois: A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" in *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 116. Southern's analysis of the content of Peter's letters, however, is remarkably subtle and sensitive.

16. Constable, "The Popularity of Twelfth-Century Writers"; Ethel Higonnet, "Spiritual Ideas in the Letters of Peter of Blois," *Speculum* 50 (1975): 218–44.

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provided a tempting ally for the historians participating in the "Revolt of the Medievalists," the scholarly movement that challenged Jacob Burckhardt's notion of a Quattrocento of sudden cultural ferment, pushed the phenomenon of the "Renaissance" back to the twelfth century, and relocated it to northern France.[17] Peter read and cited the classics, and his academic pedigree boasted the famous schools of Tours, Chartres, Paris, and Bologna. Charles Homer Haskins duly noted his significance as a minor luminary of the period in *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, where the archdeacon appears as a letter writer, court figure, eminent Latinist, and exemplar of the same "tradition of humanism" as John of Salisbury, who also studied at Paris and figured prominently in contemporary ecclesiastical politics.[18] He also received close attention in such general studies as Ghellinck's *L'essor de litérature latine au XIIe siècle*.[19] But Peter could never be a John of Salisbury, in part, it was argued, because he in fact *tried* to be John of Salisbury. In 1947, Philippe Delhaye pointed out several passages in Letter 101 that seemed to be verbatim borrowings from John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, and dismissed Peter with a scathing rebuke: "fie, le villein!"[20] For students of the classical tradition and the literary world of the twelfth century, then, Peter of Blois remained at best a potentially useful author who required cautious treatment.

Richard Southern, generally a sympathetic reader of Peter, conceded that "in the literary, academic sense in which the word has been traditionally used in universities, I am sure he must score low marks as a humanist."[21] He still managed to reintroduce the low-scoring cleric to the scholarly mainstream in an engaging eight-page section of his magisterial *Making of the Middle Ages*, where Peter serves to "illustrate the new conditions of study and learning, the market for learned men and a scholar's reaction to the world."[22] Even these eight pages represented in some respects a failure, for Southern had begun his doctoral thesis on Peter but abandoned the project not only because World War II intervened, but because the research began to seem "unprofitable." The manuscript dif-

17. See Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1948), 329–85.

18. Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, 50, 51, 61, 104, 146, 380.

19. J. de Ghellinck, *L'essor de la litérature latine au XIIe siècle*, 2nd ed. (Brussells: Desclée de Brouwer, 1955), passim.

20. See Philippe Delhaye, "Un témoignage frauduleux de Pierre de Blois sur la pédagogie du XIIe siècle," *Recherches de theologie ancienne et medievale* 14 (1947): 329–31.

21. Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 125.

22. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1953), 210.

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ficulties seemed insurmountable, and Sir Richard was genuinely troubled by the accusations of plagiarism most damningly leveled by Delhaye. In a 1970 article he revisited the research he had begun in the 1930s and conceded:

> I can understand the unusual note of vituperation which appears in many modern judgments on Peter of Blois: it springs from a sense of deception, of hopes unfulfilled, of labour lost. There is the stale smell of second-hand clothes. It is not pleasant.[23]

Southern nevertheless answered the question posed in the title of his article, "Peter of Blois: A Twelfth-Century Humanist?," in the affirmative, albeit tentatively and by relying on a somewhat idiosyncratic definition of the term. "In all [Peter's] uncertainties of mind and will and self-revelation we seem to see the shadowy outline of a Petrarch or Erasmus."[24]

Southern's "medieval humanism" implied a Christian humanism that sought to explain a divine order through human capabilities, and he insisted that Peter was "seriously a Christian." He did not, however, study Peter closely as a spiritual author, and most scholars of twelfth-century religious life have either ignored or insulted Peter's sizeable body of spiritual writings. The spiritual currents of the twelfth century, including eucharistic piety, praise of poverty, admiration of the monastic life, and Christian friendship, underlie much of the letter collection, and Peter also left behind a collection of sermons and a commentary on Job. Perhaps predictably, his spirituality has been attacked in much the same way as his humanism: for the derivative nature of many of his writings and for a perceived lack of depth. The great French historian of monastic spirituality, Jean Leclercq, associated Peter with a group of secular clerical writers not terribly concerned with imparting a Christian message through their writings, and so set Peter apart from the period's most vital spiritual figures.[25] Peter, however, continued to enthrall some readers.

In 1932 M.-M. Davy attempted to restore Peter's reputation as a spiritual writer through an edition of his treatise *De amicitia Christiana et de dilectione Dei et proximi*, which appeared as *Un traité de l'amour du 12e siècle*.[26] She made some bold claims on Peter's behalf: "moraliste et théologien, Pierre de Blois est aussi un mystique."[27] In making this judgment,

23. Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 107.

24. Ibid., 129.

25. Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. Catherine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961), 142–43.

26. M.-M. Davy, ed., *Un traité de l'amour du 12e siècle: Pierre de Blois* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1932).

27. Ibid., 83.

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however, Davy downplayed the tract's occasional word-for-word borrowings from Aelred of Rievaulx, and she thus attracted blistering criticism from later scholars, including the aforementioned Delhaye.[28] Peter's spirituality, then, was either derivative (some might call this a charitable term) or simply without the affective energy and beauty of his monastic contemporaries.

Still, derivative or not, Peter's letters, sermons, and tracts ring with the language of Christian love, friendship, and eucharistic devotion so characteristic of those contemporaries. He praised *caritas*, urged monks to stay in their cloisters, and admonished clerics who violated the precepts of ecclesiastical reform by hunting and drinking. He employed the methods of "symbolist" theology while also dabbling in the more systematic approach associated with early Scholasticism.[29] Moreover, he frequently found himself in a state of considerable anxiety over the fate of his soul. There is something about his piety that needs to be taken seriously. In her posthumously published 1975 article, Higonnet argued that the evidence suggested that "the explanation of the popularity of Peter's collection can be sought in its spiritual ideas," above all those ideas that concerned morality.[30] By returning to devotional themes again and again, Peter allows readers to trace the progression of his spirituality as he worked in the various institutions of the twelfth century. With their emphasis on moral reform and individual piety, his letters expressed the concerns of ecclesiastical reform while pointing toward a highly interiorized sort of devotion.

Peter also channeled his religiosity into a series of tracts on the Third Crusade, which have been valuable to Jonathan Riley-Smith and Paul Alphandéry in their work on the devotional aspects of crusading. Alphandéry showed how Peter tied the act of crusading to the virtue of poverty and blamed the fall of Jerusalem on the nobility's obsession with the vanities of the world.[31] Riley-Smith argued that Peter framed the Third Crusade as an act of love and so formulated a crusading rationale directly linked to the spiritual currents of the twelfth-century cloister.[32]

But relatively few secular clerics of the twelfth century are today ad-

28. On the relationship between Peter and Aelred's works on friendship, see E. Vansteenberghe, "Deux théoriciens de l'amitié," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 12 (1932): 572–88; and Philippe Delhaye, "Deux adaptations du *De amicitia* de Cicéron au XIIe siècle," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 15 (1948): 304–31.

29. See Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, esp. 2:7–24.

30. Higonnet, "Spiritual Ideas," 218.

31. Paul Alphandéry, *La chrétienté et l'idée de croisade, Vol. 2: Recommencements nécessaires (XIIe–XIIIe siècles)* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1959), 36–40.

32. Jonathan Riley-Smith, "Crusading as an Act of Love," *History* 65 (1980): 179–92.

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mired for their spiritual qualities, and a contemporary joke even asked whether an archdeacon could be saved.[33] Had Peter heard this quip, it might have cut close to the bone. He felt acutely the criticism that he had embraced a career among the great men of England and France too zealously. Toward the end of his life, he thought about the Last Judgment: "It is hard for the upright to be saved (I Peter 4: 18), and I, where will I go?"[34] This anxiety ultimately arose from the accepted responsibilities of the secular clergy, which traditionally included advising secular lords and looking after the affairs of dioceses. The Gregorian reformers of the eleventh century had sought definitively to disentangle the conflicting obligations of the clerks, but were only partly successful. Certainly by the twelfth century, the Church insisted on clerical celibacy more vigorously, and several compromises had distinguished the sacerdotal obligations of the clergy from their temporal ones.[35] Perhaps because of the widening gap between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*, those who worked under both spheres felt extreme pressure. Nigel de Longchamps, writing around 1190, called Peter's friend William de Longchamps, bishop of Ely, a "double man" because he was both a bishop and the royal chancellor.[36] Meanwhile, a vigorous literature grew up to lampoon the work of secular clerics in the world.[37]

Despite these and other criticisms, clerics needed jobs, and kings and bishops needed men to write their documents, promulgate their laws, argue legal appeals, and negotiate their treaties. Peter and countless other clerics sought to advance through this loose system of patronage and administration, relying on an often unreliable combination of talent and connections. This activity centered on the courts of kings, bishops, dukes, and counts where the magnates of Europe ruled their subjects and entertained themselves. Whereas in the nineteenth century, scholars of medieval England looked for evidence of the development of English institutions and legal practice, more recent work has focused on the elusive concept of "courtly culture" prevalent, with some regional variation, in the British Isles as well as France, Germany, and Italy. In many studies of this

33. John of Salisbury, *The Letters of John of Salisbury, Vol. 2: The Later Letters (1163–1180)*, ed. W. J. Millor and C. N. L. Brooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 24–25.

34. "Vix iustus salvabitur, et ego quo ibo?": *Latter Letters*, no. 34, p. 171.

35. See Gerd Tellenbach, *The Church in Western Europe from the Tenth to the Early Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 304–47.

36. *Nigellus de Longchamps dit Wireker: Tractatus contra curiales et officiales clericos*, ed. A. Boutemy (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), 150.

37. C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals 939–1210* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 176–94.

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cultural phenomenon, scholars have portrayed Peter as one of legions of hangers-on at the centers of ecclesiastical power trying to make a name and to earn an income.[38] But Peter expressed his discomfort with the world of courts and clerics as articulately as anyone ever did, confronting a seismic institutional shift in Western Europe. The court became first a center of ever more assertive royal administrative power and ultimately, by the early modern period, an arbiter of values and taste.[39]

The Approach of This Book: Toward an Understanding of Clerical Culture

Scholarly attempts to identify Peter as a scholar, bureaucrat, courtier, mystic, or sinner necessarily discuss only a small aspect of Peter's career and ideals, and he ultimately resists clear definition according to the rubrics of recent scholarship. Perhaps Peter can speak for himself on the matter of what he essentially was: *Secularis sum et seculo sequor*, "I am worldly and I follow the world," or "I am secular and I follow the world." A few lines later in the same letter, beseeching a group of monks to pray for his soul as he nears death in what would be the last decade of his life, he admits that if someone "thought it odd to pray for a secular cleric," it would be no surprise.[40] It is clear where Peter saw himself when he contemplated the fate of his soul. He was a secular cleric.

It would be understandable if one were reluctant to grant a difficult figure like Peter the luxury of self-definition; however, the lives and careers of the secular clergy were in fact full of contrary possibilities and difficult choices, and the meaning of the term, from a historian's point of view, is itself quite tortured. Even in the twelfth century, they occupied an ambiguous social space between monks and laymen, and they still fit awkwardly into scholarship on medieval religious life, much of which has emphasized the importance of community and group identity to the articulation of spiritual ideas.[41] The secular clergy, in fact, represent a kind

38. E.g., Türk, *Nugae curialium;* Claus Uhlig, *Die Hofkritik im England des Mittelalters und der Renaissance: Studien zu einem Gemeinplatz der europäischen Moralistik,* Quellen und Forschungen zur Sprach und Kulturgeschichte der germanischen Völker 56 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1973); Gunnar Stollberg, *Die soziale Stellung der intellektuellen Obersicht im England des 12 Jahrhunderts,* Historische Studien 427 (Lubeck: Mathiessen Verlag, 1973).

39. See especially Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process,* trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994).

40. "In seculo sum et seculum sequor"; "Videbitur forte alicui absurdum orare pro clerico seculari": *Later Letters,* no. 33, p. 169.

41. See especially Caroline Walker Bynum, *Docere Verbo et Exemplo: An Aspect of Twelfth-*

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of blank space on our conceptual map of the High Middle Ages. We take them for granted, but do not have a working model that explains their activities and ideals. We all seem to know what secular clerics were not: they were neither monks nor laymen, though they were accused of acting too much like the latter. In fact, the construction of clerical identity seems to have been effected, by twelfth-century writers and modern historians alike, through moral criticism, satire, and simple opposition with the cloistered orders. The secular clergy, especially ambitious archdeacons, bore the brunt of a large proportion of contemporary social criticism. It was thus in the midst of anxiety over their professional and spiritual health, and as the targets of moral critique from a great variety of quarters, that men like Peter created a practical theology of the secular cleric based on ideals of wide-ranging provenance, satire, and exegesis, all suited to the new clerical world of the late twelfth century.

Peter's letter collection, addressed to clergy of all ranks from all over Europe, allows us to re-create his clerical world, his *saeculum*. That world depended on the practice of the written word. After getting a solid education in the arts, law, and theology, Peter attested documents, criticized incompetent scribes, and wrote to and about scholars. He prosecuted cases, and understood the power of written communication well enough to break the seal on a royal letter so its clauses could be enhanced by his archbishop.[42] Through all these pursuits Peter participated in the clericalization of Western Europe, a governmental, cultural, and social transformation that R. I. Moore has termed the "first European Revolution."[43] This shift depended upon and in turn helped influence the development of literate administration, the rise of universities, and the centralization and increasing confidence of the institutional Church.

A twelfth-century cleric was defined by his literacy and by ordination. The former attribute allowed him to interpret Scripture, to instruct the flock, and to perform the business of government, while the latter emphasized his sacramentality, his proprietorship of the keys to salvation. As a result, literate culture must be seen in the context of profound governmental and cultural changes. Michael Clanchy began his study on the shift from "memory to written record" with figures that present the

Century Spirituality, Harvard Theological Studies 31 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholar's Press, 1979); Giles Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*.

42. See below, chapter 4.

43. R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution c. 970–1215* (Oxford and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000).

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phenomenon quite elegantly, at least in the case of England: whereas only some two thousand charters and writs survive from the period 593–1066, the thirteenth century has bequeathed to historians "tens of thousands" of the same sorts of documents. Yet the scale of literate administration was not all that changed. Clanchy sought to trace "the spread of literate modes both socially and territorially."[44] The social implication of this transformation lay in part in the formation of a class of litterati charged with producing and interpreting these documents. Moore has expanded on this idea by arguing that twelfth-century Europe saw a thorough redistribution of power to "*clerici* who became the power elite of the new Europe" and who "constituted a class in all but name, and one which was new in all but blood."[45] Peter of Blois's letter collection and other writings provide materials from which many elements of this clerical culture can be reconstructed.

The very requirements of the epistolary genre, with its formulaic address clauses and conventions for respecting rank, allow the collection to present a kind of social taxonomy of the clergy from anonymous cathedral canons to cardinals and popes. Moreover, Peter wrote to secular and regular clerics in most of the important institutions of the century, including monasteries of all the major orders, cathedral schools, episcopal and archiepiscopal *familiae,* royal courts, and the College of Cardinals in Rome. The written Latin word bound together these personnel and institutions, spread as they were throughout Western Christendom.[46]

Peter's career and writings demonstrate three fundamental elements of the shared culture of the secular clergy. First, with a few exceptions such as the College of Cardinals and the papal curia, the institutions of the period were highly fluid and difficult to define. Historians have tended to use terms such as "court" and "school" in ways that obscure the elusiveness of their referents.[47] Moreover, these terms often carried moral or even eschatological meanings, springing from myriad ideologi-

44. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record,* 1–2.

45. Moore, *First European Revolution,* 6.

46. The role of the Latin-literate clergy in tying Western Christendom together is discussed throughout Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993). See also Moore, *First European Revolution,* 112–59.

47. I have addressed the semantic issues associated with courts and schools in two recent articles: "Peter of Blois and the Problem of the 'Court' in the Twelfth Century," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 27 (2004): 68–84, and "Monks and Clerks in Search of the *Beata Schola:* Peter of Celle's Warning to John of Salisbury Reconsidered," in *Teaching and Learning in Northern Europe before the University, 1000–1200,* ed. Sally Vaughn and Jay Rubenstein (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 255–77.

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cal traditions, which can confuse the issue. Peter himself traveled widely, served in a variety of capacities and can often be most clearly identified by the profoundly unclear terms *familiaris* or *curialis*. Since these terms depended on associations with power rather than a set job description, and could refer to laymen as well as clergy, they ought to be used with caution. Peter's ability to discuss courts, schools, and their personnel in so many ways stemmed from the fact that these cultural forms were still crystallizing into identifiable institutions.

Second, Peter's piety reflected the dynamism and institutional instability of the period. He synthesized ideas of scriptural, patristic, and monastic provenance into a unique and somewhat uneasy clerical piety, even going so far as to borrow passages verbatim from the Cistercian Aelred of Rievaulx's writings on Christian friendship.[48] While scholars have been quick to chastise Peter for plagiarism, no one has pointed out how fascinating it is that a secular cleric, who was derided for worldliness and who never expressed any interest in joining a monastery, should have chosen to incorporate a piece of Cistercian devotional writing into his own work. He wrote extensively on penance, especially as it related to the Third Crusade, and in his later years displayed an emotional attachment to the Eucharist. Clerical piety, as it appears in Peter's writings, combines some of the spiritual energy associated with earlier monastic spirituality, an exaltation of the clerical role in the sacraments, and a practical theology of service in the world. Many of his spiritual, theological, and sacramental concerns would be addressed three years after his death at the Fourth Lateran Council.

Third, clerical culture was in essence a culture of school-trained intellectuals, and Peter's writings map out the community of scholars who participated in the cultural flowering often known as the "Renaissance of the Twelfth Century," or when applied more strictly to theology and philosophy, "early Scholasticism." The addressees of Peter's letter collection comprise a diverse and dynamic textual community of monks, clerks, scholars, bishops, archbishops, cathedral canons, and other litterati, and demand a muddling, or at least a softening, of the rubrics by which the intellectual and spiritual output of the twelfth century have been divided.[49] Peter made a clear effort to embrace modes of religious expression emanating from Western Europe's cloisters without ever wishing to enter a monastery himself. Several of his letters and sermons display the "symbolist" mentality associated with monastic learning, while his later letters

48. See above, note 28.

49. The term "textual community" is taken from Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, 88–240.

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offer systematic analyses of Scholastic questions.[50] Peter, whether out of genuine interest (which the present study will suggest is most likely) or epistolary expediency, bridged gaps between symbol and system, between monastic and Scholastic, and his corpus bears witness to a highly dynamic and creative intellectual climate. The very attribute that has attracted the most ardent criticism, namely, his penchant for manipulating received sources, allows us to explore this climate in depth. He incorporated Scripture, patristic sources, and more contemporary traditions into his own work to form something that is highly synthetic. He then took this learning, and, using his letter collection as his medium, used it to educate his peers. As the somewhat impetuous dedication of the letter collection to Henry II implies, the learned master reflected the proper world order when he deigned to share his learning with the world.[51]

This dynamism, however, brought with it instability. Peter made choices and pursued some of the new opportunities, but not always with happy results. The tensions inherent in medieval learning clearly troubled him, and he could argue in favor of or against study of the classics, or of immersion in the new preprofessional education. He seldom made an education-related critique that was not leveled at him by someone else. If the developments of the twelfth century can be described as a "renaissance," it was a renaissance that presented moral and professional challenges to its participants.[52]

Although these chapters will not focus exclusively on Peter's letter collection, the epistolary genre offers the key to understanding what I call "the clerical dilemma," the balancing of professional, educational, and spiritual concerns in an uneasy synthesis. Not only does the collection provide insight into power relations and patronage within the clerical community through its address clauses and requests for favors, but the shifting nature of Peter's collection illustrates many of the pressures that weighed on clerks. The instability of Peter's career is reflected in the un-

50. See M.-D. Chenu, "The Symbolist Mentality," in *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century,* ed., trans. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 37 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 99–145; Southern, *The Heroic Age;* and Thomas Head, "'Scholastic' and 'Monastic' Theology: A Change of Paradigm?" in *Paradigms in Medieval Thought: Applications in Medieval Disciplines,* ed. Nancy van Deusen and Alvin E. Ford, Medieval Studies 3 (Lewiston, Maine: Edwin Mellen, 1990), 127–41.

51. This point is argued elegantly by Mia Münster-Swendsen, "The Model of Scholastic Mastery in Northern Europe, 970–1200," in *Teaching and Learning in Northern Europe, 1000–1200,* 307–42.

52. For a recent assessment of the debate over the "Renaissance of the Twelfth Century," see C. Stephen Jaeger, "Pessimism in the Twelfth-Century 'Renaissance,'" *Speculum* 78 (2003): 1151–83.

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stable nature of the letter collection, whose manuscripts offer multiple readings of several letters, occasional outright changes of mind, and, it must be admitted, passages that venture into fantasy. It is a historical record as Peter chose to compile it, first around 1184, and again throughout the 1190s, and as such needs to be read not as a true biography or uncomplicated chronicle but a reflection of Peter's thought world at the moment of compilation. I have therefore not attempted to construct this book as an intellectual biography, but instead offer a series of chapters on the various dilemmas that Peter confronted, sometimes retrospectively, in his letters and treatises.[53]

Although the messiness of the manuscript tradition, which stems in part from Peter's own editorial work, does place obstacles in the way of fixing the texts of some of the letters, it also provides insight into the way twelfth-century writers worked. This messiness can be embraced as an aid to understanding Peter just as much as it can be feared as a textual nightmare. Manuscript-related issues figure prominently in almost every chapter below. I have continued to cite the nineteenth-century *Patrologia* edition of Peter's writings, in a few places pointing out crucial variants, many of which were identified by previous scholars. This book concludes with an appendix on the manuscript tradition, which consists of a bibliographical essay on past work on the tradition, an overview of the crucial problems, and a series of case studies that illustrate these problems and how they can be overcome, or at least mitigated. One cannot assume, however, that even a complete modern edition of Peter of Blois's corpus will answer every question a historian could pose about his career and work. With a figure as complex and self-contradictory as Peter, the medium may in fact provide a useful message.

53. In his recently published French translation of some of Peter's letters (see above, note 6), Türk organized the letters chronologically so as to reconstruct the various stages of Peter's life. While this makes for a clear organization, it places more trust in Peter as a recorder of facts and events than may be warranted.

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Catholic University of America Press

Chapter Title: A Clerical Life

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma
Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century
Book Author(s): John D. Cotts
Published by: Catholic University of America Press. (2009)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.6

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I suffer, I suffer profoundly,
and there is no one who
will have compassion and
soothe the afflicted.[1]

1 *A Clerical Life*

This bitter complaint introduces the only letter in which Peter of Blois reveals any significant information about his early life. A canon of Chartres cathedral, where Peter himself held a canonry in absentia, was waging a campaign of slander against him, and in whispers had accused Peter's late father of gross immorality.[2] The gossip proved damning enough to cost him the cathedral provostship, which he coveted and which the archbishop of Sens had promised him. The damage done, he still assured his "dearest friends," the dean of Chartres and the archdeacon of Blois, that his father, though somewhat impoverished, was a Breton nobleman, learned if somewhat simple. Perhaps the family's troubles were more than financial, for the letter refers to a period of exile that is otherwise unexplained:

> As is commonly known, my father and mother hail from the *optimates* of Brittany. And I do not say this as a boast, but to silence the mouths of liars (Ps. 63.12), who have the audacity to discredit their own rather degenerate nobility. Indeed I think that the true and praiseworthy nobility is that which combines lineage with virtue [*cum generis claritate virtutem*], of which they who begrudge my father the poverty of his exile are devoid. Was not Brutus an exile? Was not Aeneas?[3]

This may call to mind the Breton origins of that other twelfth-century intellectual, Abelard. Peter here displays the defensive posture and literary flair that run through all his writings. Questions about his origins, his education, and his choices dogged him throughout his

1. "Patior, patior vehementer, et non est, qui compatiatur, qui misereatur afflicto": *Ep.* 49, *PL* 207, 145.

2. This letter probably dates to the early to mid-1170s. Peter's acquaintance John of Salisbury became bishop of Chartres in 1176, after which time Peter addressed his complaints about the situation in that cathedral directly to him. See *Epp.* 72 and 130.

3. *Ep.* 49, *PL* 207, 147.

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life, and when he did discuss his biography it is nearly always in the service of polemic. The reader of Peter's letters thus faces a difficult task in disentangling autobiography from rhetoric; autobiographical material serves rhetorical and even moral purposes, just as classical and scriptural allusions did, adorning the text and buttressing arguments. Peter employed this strategy often, as when he wrote of his experience as a legal advocate in a letter acknowledging the difficulties of serving both God and king, or when he described his career as a law student at Bologna in a diatribe against legal study and in favor of theology.[4] We know what we do know about Peter's life because he chose to reveal it in a variety of specific epistolary situations, but unlike Abelard he never saw fit to write a longer narrative detailing his troubles. The life he reveals is, as a result, a reflection of his needs and interests as a writer and a working cleric. Epistolary convention and professional strategies impinge on the autobiography that runs through his writings, and a relative lack of corroborating documentary evidence makes his character even more elusive. Moreover, Peter from time to time strains a reader's credulity with rather dubious claims. Was he really offered the archbishopric of Naples or requested to write letters that could help free Richard I from captivity? Did he in fact have the foresight to predict a "glorious end" for Thomas Becket in 1169? As we shall see, his life story even echoes that of St. Paul at one point. A scholar working on these letters needs to navigate rhetorical and self-serving flourishes while attempting to reconstruct a skeleton of Peter's life and itinerary. Furthermore, each letter cannot be taken to provide a historical account of the time to which it can be dated. Instead, as a group they reflect Peter's interest and state of mind at the time(s) the letters were collected. This book, therefore, embraces a thematic, rather than a biographical organization; however, to place the rest of the work in proper context, it begins with a biographical sketch that draws whenever possible on such evidence as exists outside the letter collection.

The clerical life recounted in Peter's letters is that of a thinking, adapting professional operating on a bewildering number of cultural axes: the rise of administrative kingship, the development of universities and of the *ars dictandi*, and the Church and state issues that drove the Becket affair and its aftermath, among others. In similar fashion Peter's activity spanned an intriguing geographical range, from the court of Sicily in the south through Rome and Bologna, west to Paris and the Loire valley, then northwest through Rouen and across the Channel to Canterbury

4. *Later Letters,* no. 10, pp. 52–62; *Ep.* 26, *PL* 207, 91–92 (also edited in Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 70–80).

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and finally London. His correspondents were arrayed across an equally vast expanse of Latin Christendom, suggesting that Peter was a consummate cosmopolitan intellectual participating in a transnational republic of letters. Along with the other clerics whose names appear in his address clauses or next to his on charter subscription lists, Peter progressed from a solid educational background in the cathedral schools to legal training to ecclesiastical administration and royal curial service. He may not have achieved what he considered to be financial or professional security, but he avoided the kind of disgrace late in life that haunted some of his contemporaries, including his correspondents John of Salisbury and Arnulf of Lisieux.[5] Peter's story is that of a talented cleric who lacked crucial family connections and who lived in the shadows of the great, struggling to pursue a career based on the written word and to map out a morally acceptable conception of the secular cleric. As a secular he lived in the world, bound by profession to the Church and immersed in the culture of the literate elite.

The satirical literature of the twelfth century often portrayed the secular clergy as shameless dilettantes forever inventing new schemes to advance in the world and to gain glory for themselves. Peter's older contemporary, the Archpoet of Cologne, describing his life as a scholar, courtier, lover, and drunkard, described himself as a "leaf played by the wind . . . a winding river ever deviating."[6] This pervasive sense of instability reflects the lot of many litterati of their century, who faced opportunities and choices in new but highly fluid institutional contexts. Peter's writings thus illustrate a significant cultural, as well as a personal, drama, a struggle to make a career for himself while constructing a morally and theologically acceptable course for the secular cleric.

Origins and Early Education: From the Loire to Paris and Bologna

Peter's name suggests he was born in Blois, but there is no documentary evidence to support this.[7] He never mentioned that town as the place of

5. On John as bishop of Chartres, see Edouard Jeauneau, "Jean de Salisbury, évèque de Chartres," *Notre Dame de Chartres* 11, no. 44 (1980): 3–9, and Türk, *Nugae Curialium*, 92–94; on Arnulf, see Carolyn Schriber, *The Dilemma of Arnulf of Lisieux: New Ideas versus Old Ideals* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), esp. 98–122.

6. *Die Gedichte des Archipoeta*, ed. Heinrich Watenphul and Heinrich Krefeld (Heidelberg, 1958), 73–76. Translation my own.

7. On French toponyms among clergy who worked in twelfth-century England, see Julia Barrow, "Origins and Careers of Cathedral Canons in Twelfth-Century England," *Medieval Prosopography* 21 (2000): 23–40, at 29–34.

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his birth when he mentions it at all, but the course of his early life indicates that if not his native land, the region of the Loire was his home from an early age. During Peter's childhood and juvenile years the house of the counts of Blois wielded immense powers as rulers of a county constituting "the boss-stone of the power structures of northern France."[8] Many of the elite of Blois died on crusade, but those who did not forged an alliance with the kings of England through shrewd marriages, and one of them, Stephen, became king himself in 1135. When he wrote of his native Loire valley and surrounding regions, however, Peter directs his attention to their ecclesiastical and educational institutions, for these institutions figured most prominently in his clerical career.

He had little to say about his family, except when he was chastising his nephews or defending his own character. According to the letter cited at the beginning of this chapter, his family was noble but rather poor and came from Brittany. In a much later piece, written around 1205 and perhaps later, he mentions that he oversaw his father's estate in the county of Blois, which he had to protect from the predations of his nephews. He reminds them that "my father held no patrimony in the territory of Blois, but he acquired it through his own diligence, and he married off all his daughters honorably."[9] His sisters remain anonymous; one of them might have been Christiana, the *dilectissima soror* to whom Peter wrote a letter in praise of virginity, although *soror* here could simply convey the sense of "sister in Christ" and so entail no biological relationship.[10] His brother William, who briefly served as an abbot in Sicily and wrote poetry, had considerable education and left behind a competent Latin comedy titled *Alda*.[11] At least three nephews, who were as difficult as twelfth-century nephews are reputed to have been, emerge from the letters, one of whom seems to have been the son of one of Peter's sisters.[12] William, the prior of Canterbury, and Peter Minet, bishop of Périgueux in the 1170s, are each addressed as a *consanguineus* of Peter, and he counted one Simon de Le Puy, a master who apparently taught with the Latin translation of

8. David Crouch, *The Reign of King Stephen, 1135–1154* (Harlow, U.K.: Longman, 2000), 11.

9. *Later Letters,* no. 6, p. 38. Peter also refers to his family's poverty in *Ep.* 3, *PL* 207, 7–11, again as part of a response to a slanderer.

10. *Ep.* 36, *PL* 207, 114–15.

11. On William, see LynnWhite Jr., "For the Biography of William of Blois," *English Historical Review* 50 (1935): 487–90. For a discussion of *Alda,* see John W. Baldwin, *The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 98, 108–10. The work was edited in the nineteenth century by Carl Lohmeyer (Leipzig, 1892) and is also found in Gustaf Cohen, ed., *La comédie latine en France au XIIe siècle* (Paris, 1931), i, 107–52.

12. *Epp.* 131, 132; *Later Letters,* no. 6, pp. 37–41.

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Abu Ma'shar's astronomical manual, as an uncle.[13] Peter's extended family clearly achieved positions of some importance both in England and on the Continent, and his male relatives sought out careers in the Church. Such ambitions would have led them to study in the schools, and they were geographically well positioned to do so. Peter tells us almost nothing of the activities of family members not involved in ecclesiastical affairs, and all we know about the family's estate is that his father "publicly and solemnly established me as the heir of all of his goods that remained [after the daughters' dowries were distributed], and I have always been lord and heir of all of these, even up to your [Peter's nephews'] time, without any interruption or contradiction."[14]

Peter in fact claimed the rich intellectual traditions of the Loire valley as his true patrimony. Blois sat in the midst of three cathedral cities where prominent masters taught the liberal arts: Chartres to the north, Tours to the west, and Orleans to the east. Beyond Chartres, to the northeast, lay Paris, whose schools and masters would coalesce into a university by the end of Peter's life, and whose reputation would outstrip that of its rivals during that time. Unfortunately, his letters provide essentially no details about the nature of the school of Chartres which has inspired considerable scholarly controversy, and he betrays no immersion in the Neoplatonic teachings of its earlier masters. Peter does show signs of training in the *ars dictaminis*, the rules of rhetoric which reached Tours and Orléans by the 1140s.[15] Although the exact progression of his studies cannot be reconstructed from the evidence of the letters, Peter makes it quite clear that he spent time at both Chartres and Tours, and expresses a particularly strong attachment to the former. Perhaps his fellow humanist John of Salisbury exerted some influence on Peter's behalf, for he became a canon of Chartres during John's episcopacy—in a gushing letter to John he called himself *tuus canonicus*—but he had no success in his repeated attempts to acquire a position of prominence in the cathedral, specifically

13. *Epp.* 32, 34, and on Simon de Le Puy, *Later Letters*, no. 52, p. 236, with Revell's note.

14. *Later Letters*, no. 6, pp. 38–39.

15. On the teaching of rhetoric at Tours and Orleans, see James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 226–30; and *Repertorium der Artes Dictandi des Mittelalters I*, ed. Franz Josef Worstbrock, Monika Klaes, and Jutta Lütten (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1992), 43–62. The debate over the importance and nature of the school of Chartres is summarized in R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, 2:58–101. Cf. Nikolaus Häring, "Chartres and Paris Revisited," in *Studies in Honour of Anton Charles Pegis*, ed. J. Reginald O'Donnell (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1975), 268–329.

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the provostship that had allegedly been promised to him.[16] In several letters Peter directed considerable energy to fighting off detractors, who he felt were ruining his chances of achieving his primary goal of a benefice in his "native land."[17] While this may refer generally to France, it is clear from Chartres's prominence in several letters that he had his heart set on returning to that church. It seems altogether appropriate that Peter should have felt so strongly about Chartres, since it represented the best of high intellectual culture in the early twelfth century and had a thriving community of secular canons, as well as, it should be added, a tradition of letter writing embodied in Ivo of Chartres's correspondence.[18] For Peter, the cathedral, its school, and its chapter represented a spiritual home as well as a potential source of work and income in the middle of his career.

He also refers to a stay at Tours, the dates of which cannot be pinpointed with any certainty. Letter 12 asks a nephew to send him "verses and trifles [*versus et ludicra*] that I wrote at Tours," though he does not say when or to what purpose he studied there.[19] It seems reasonable to suppose, however, that Peter began his studies with the *trivium*, and the reference to poetry hints that this was the sort of study he pursued at Tours. When Peter was an adolescent and young adult, the intellectual shadow of Hildebert of Lavardin (died 1133) must have hung heavily over this cathedral school, since he had ended his career as archbishop of that see after participating for years in a circle of intellectual poet-bishops of northern France, a leading voice of what has been called a *Loirekreis*.[20] When Peter listed the authors he read as a boy, Hildebert was the only medieval author he mentioned, and the only author whose name Peter did not borrow from an almost identical list that appears in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*.[21] Hildebert provided an ideal model for Peter. Both men issued letter collections, sermons arranged around the liturgical year, poems and shorter theological works; and both were not simply scholars but ecclesiastics in the world. Hildebert even found himself writing from

16. *Ep.* 70, *PL* 207, 217. On Peter's canonry at Chartres, see R. W. Southern, "The Necessity for Two Peters of Blois," in *Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Margaret Gibson*, ed. Lesley Smith and Benedicta Ward (London and Rio Grande, Ohio: Hambledon Press, 1992), 109.

17. "Super omnia desiderabilia mea erat praecipuum, ut in terra nativitatis meae aliquod beneficium obtinerem": *Ep.* 72, *PL* 207, 222. See also *Epp.* 20, 130, 218.

18. See Jean Leclercq, "La collection des letters d'Yves de Chartres," *Révue Bénédictine* 56 (1946): 108–25.

19. *Ep.* 12, *PL* 207, 39.

20. Peter von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin, 1056–1133: Humanitas an der Schwelle des höfischen Zeitalters* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1965), 16.

21. *Ep.* 101, *PL* 207, 314; see also below, chapter 3.

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prison on one occasion as a result of a dynastic dispute (perhaps this helped inform Peter's account of his own capture by an antipope's henchman, referred to below).[22]

At the very time Peter advanced through the arts curriculum, the eleventh-century model of cathedral school education that had produced Hildebert was being rendered obsolete by new developments at Paris, and so it makes perfect sense that the teenaged cleric from Blois proceeded to the Île de France in the 1140s.[23] Peter probably studied under John of Salisbury, himself a product of Paris and arguably the shrewdest observer of its culture.[24] He referred to John as his *magister* in one of his letters, but this may be simply a term of respect.[25] A late letter, however, indicates that he spent time at Paris as a teenager in the 1140s, when John is known to have taught there.[26] He claims to have seen the master Geoffrey of Peronne, who died in 1143 or 1147, *in scholiis Parisiis*.[27] The best conclusion to draw from the available evidence is that Peter had some early education at Chartres and then Tours before moving on to Paris, where he pursued a standard course in the arts. He also would have entered clerical orders at this point, though at what grade cannot be ascertained (he became a priest only in the 1190s, and before that describes himself as holding deacon's orders).[28]

Peter then made a fairly common choice to move beyond the liberal arts and study one of the advanced disciplines, and so he set out for Bologna to immerse himself in the study of law. The popularity and pitfalls of legal study are made clear by the legions of satirists who mocked the ambitions of men engaged in it, and Peter struggled with the potential moral difficulties of immersing himself in civil law. But we only know of Peter's stay in Bologna because it did not last. In Letter 26, Peter explained to an unknown friend why he abandoned the city and its school before completing his course of study:

22. Hildebert of Lavardin, *Ep.* 2.17, *PL* 171, 225–26; von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin*, 11.

23. This transformation is discussed by C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

24. This relationship is discussed in Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 109; and Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 10.

25. *Ep.* 22, *PL* 207, 77.

26. Olga Weijers, "The Chronology of John of Salisbury's Studies in France (*Metalogicon* II.10)," in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. Micahel Wilks, Studies in Church History Subsidia 3 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 109–16. Cf. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, 1:214–26.

27. *Later Letters*, no. 5, p. 33.

28. *Ep.* 123, *PL* 207, 364. On clerical orders among students, see Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, 206–7.

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As I am yours and most devoted to you, I indulge in the labor of theology at Paris, often sighing for the camps of the Bolognese militia [*Bononiensis castra militiae*], which I ardently left behind, both quickly and prematurely.[29]

Peter describes this transitional phase in a letter in which he also assures his readers that "it is a matter fraught with peril for clerics to practice law."[30] His move from Bologna back to Paris (apparently by way of Rome) indicates a larger, recurring tension in his works between the branches of learning. Again Peter introduced biographical information in the service of polemic. At any rate, he never became a master in theology, though his later letters show that he had studied with followers of Peter Lombard and had some grasp of the early Scholastic method.[31] Theology was an ideal to strive for as much as a true professional option.

At the end of his stay in Bologna, and before he returned to the schools of Paris, he likely traveled to Rome to visit the court of Alexander III. On the way, however, he fell into the hands of the adherents of Octavian, the antipope Victor IV (elected 1159), and had to escape from his prison (he claims) by descending a wall in a basket (*per murum in sporta dimissus sum*).[32] He recounted this incident in an invective written against Octavian and his followers, clearly intended to illustrate Peter's loyalty to the true pope and what he went through as a result of that loyalty.[33] He had become at least indirectly involved in important affairs of the Church. This young cleric, the letter would have readers believe, had enough personal importance to warrant capture and imprisonment by the antipope's henchmen (and perhaps he did). The passage, however, neatly introduces another problem with reading the letters for biography, for according to Acts 9:25, St. Paul's disciples rescued him from captivity in a remarkably similar fashion: they let him down a wall in a basket (*per murum dimiserunt eum submittentes in sporta*). No cleric trained in Scripture could have missed the parallel, so Peter could not have been trying to slip something fictitious past his readers. It seems more likely that he embellished the narrative so as to serve the larger purposes of

29. *Ep.* 26, *PL* 207, 91 (more recently edited in Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 73).

30. "res plena discriminis est in clericis usus legum": *PL* 207, 91 (Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 77). This phrase is a later addition by Peter, as discussed in chapter 3, below.

31. See especially *Later Letters*, nos. 28, 29, 50, 51, 56, 71, 74.

32. For an introduction to the "Octavian Schism," see I. S. Robinson, *The Papacy 1073–1198: Continuity and Innovation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 78–83.

33. *Ep.* 48, *PL* 207, 143–44. Also, Henry II, with whom Peter claimed intimacy, had himself threatened to ally himself to antipope Paschal III in the 1160s, so Peter had good reason to emphasize his devotion to a canonically elected pontiff. See Matin Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire 1154–1224*, trans. David Crouch (Harlow, U.K.: Pearson, 2007), 240.

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the letter collection. Not only did he make a point of intertwining his life story with the weightiest problems of ecclesiastical politics, but he also enmeshed himself in the scriptural tradition. The letter collection, after all, served didactic, descriptive, and literary purposes simultaneously. That his itinerary becomes nearly impossible to trace for a few years after this incident illustrates that biographical narrative was somewhat alien to the usual purposes of a letter collection.

To the Edge of the Clerical World and Back

Given Peter's oft-expressed sentimental ties to France, it seems quite likely that he returned there after his alleged adventure in the basket, and a few references from later letters place him in Paris during the 1160s. In the 1190s, upon the elevation of Odo de Sully to the bishopric of Paris, Peter claimed that he had known and loved the young Odo "toward the beginnings of his studies" *(circa primitias studiorum ejus)* at Paris which, given the new prelate's age, would have been approximately thirty years earlier. The youth's teacher was apparently one Peter de Verne, whom Peter calls one of his own students.[34] Apart from this there is scant evidence that he worked as a master in Paris, though scholars have argued that several letters imply that he actively, but unsuccessfully, pursued a teaching career. In Letter 9, Peter implored a young student of his not to abandon the schools, but to move on to the study of theology. Without providing specific references to his own career, he represents himself as intimately bound up with the Parisian milieu. "Oft have I invited you into the ranks of scholars" *(te invitavi ad scholarem militiam)* he writes, and practically begs the young man to learn theology, warning him of eternal consequences for ending his studies prematurely. This letter praises the impact Peter's student had on the Parisian world, where he spoke as an angel among his fellow disputants, and so suggests that Peter had set himself up as a master in that world.[35] He adored Paris, bought books in the city, and praised it as a paradise on earth, as did his correspondent John of Salisbury, whose exile took him to Paris around the same period, in the early 1160s.[36]

By 1166–1167, at which time we can firmly locate Peter again, he was in his thirties, well educated, in all likelihood quite ambitious, and famil-

34. *Ep.* 126, *PL* 207, 377.

35. *Ep.* 9, *PL* 207, 26.

36. See *Epp.* 19, 51, 71. See also John of Salisbury *Ep.* 136, ed. W. J. Millor and C. N. L. Brooke, 2:7.

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iar with the schools. He had experienced, in Tours, Bologna, and Paris, much of the richness of twelfth-century scholarship, but he had not risen with the century's luminaries to the heights of logic and theology (and it is not clear how long the study of theology for which he had abandoned Bologna lasted). His training was quite normal and practical; he had more formal training in law than some prominent clerics, less than others, but he was starting to make contacts in the upper ranks of the clergy and had literary skills that were in demand. Since several of his schoolmates embarked on similar, though often more successful, careers in the Church, one cannot argue that Peter made poor, unusual, or old-fashioned educational choices.[37] Moreover, we can only imagine how many clerics, of the throngs who went to Paris and Bologna in the twelfth century, had even less successful careers, their failures recounted in no major letter collection. Perhaps he was temperamentally unsuited to the law, but he was hardly a head-in-the-clouds humanist with little practical training. Nor did Peter, when discussing his education, reveal the disenchanted and harshly satirical sensibility of the so-called Goliards, despite his wanderings and the general instability of his life. He remained committed to making the system, such as it was, work for him. By the end of the decade, opportunities began to present themselves.

Around 1165, Peter wrote a letter in the name of Archbishop Rotrou of Rouen to Henry II on the matter of educating Henry's young son and heir, which suggests that he had entered the household of that prelate. Because this letter represents the young Henry as very young, in the midst of his boyhood *(pueritiae)*, it seems to belong to the mid-to-late 1160s, when Henry was around ten years of age.[38] It is not clear how Peter came to be in the service of Rotrou, or why he migrated from Paris to Rouen, but this sort of movement would not have been at all unusual, and there seems also to have been a Rouen-Paris axis along which we can identify many highly trained cathedral clergy.[39] It has also been suggested that, since Peter's nephew Ernaud would become the abbot of St. Laumer in Blois, which was a foundation controlled by the comital house of Blois, that he may have enjoyed a relationship with the counts, to whom Rotrou was related.[40] In 1167, Rotrou took on the task of assembling an expedi-

37. *Pace* Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, 2:186–89, and Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, 165.

38. *Ep.* 67, *PL* 207, 210–13. Higonnet, *Letters of Peter of Blois*, 473, suggests a date of 1167–1168, which could be either immediately before or immediately after Peter's time in Sicily. I am inclined to agree with Türk, who favors the earlier date of 1165; see *Pierre de Blois: Ambitions et remords*, 22. Long ago Robinson suggested a date of 1165–1167; see "Peter of Blois," 103.

39. See the brief biographies in David Spear, "Les chanoines de la cathedral de Rouen pendant la période ducale," *Annales de Normandie* 41 (1991): 135–74.

40. Türk, *Pierre de Blois: Ambitions et remords*, 102. Turk notes that Ernaud also spent time

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tion of French clerks to the Sicilian court of his niece, Queen Margaret, then regent for the boy king William II, an expedition in which Peter of Blois played a considerable role.[41] R.W. Southern and Stephen Ferruolo have both characterized his participation in this adventure as a desperate gamble made necessary by his stagnant fortunes in Paris.[42] This highly speculative interpretation of Peter's motives may not be warranted. Peter undoubtedly sensed a prime opportunity for promotion and influence in a foreign country, but it need not be thus construed as an act of desperation by a disappointed place-seeker. If, as is likely, he already knew and had worked for Rotrou of Rouen, it could not have been entirely unexpected for him to move on to the service of Rotrou's kinsman.

According to the historian known as "Hugo Falcundus," Margaret asked him to send "one of her relatives, preferably Robert of Neuborg or else Stephen, son of the count of Perche."[43] Stephen offered his assistance, and set off for Palermo with a group of knights and clerks, including Peter of Blois.[44] The group of clerks had only brief success: Stephen became chancellor of Sicily and archbishop of Palermo despite his youth, while Peter served as the king's tutor and seal keeper. Peter later claimed to have exerted such influence on affairs of the realm that his opponents tried to him draw him away from the king with offers of bishoprics, all of which he refused.[45] A canon from Chartres, the mysterious Odo Quarrel, became the master of Stephen's household.

The episode, however, ended in disaster when a revolt broke out among members of the court resentful of the foreign contingent, and the Frenchmen were either killed, as was Odo (torn apart by a Messina mob), or forced to leave the island.[46] Stephen fled to Jerusalem, where he died an exile, while Peter owed his life to an illness, probably malaria, which kept

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as prior of Moutiers-au-Perche, which may be significant given Stephen of Perche's influence on Peter's career.

41. *La historia o liber de regno Sicilie e la epistola ad Petrum Panormitane ecclesiae thesaurarium di Ugo Falcundo,* ed. G. B. Siragusa, Fonti per la storia d'Italia 22 (Rome, 1897), 109, trans. Graham A. Loud and Thomas Wiedemann, *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily* (Manchester, U.K., and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 159.

42. Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 111; Ferruolo, *Origins of the University,* 158.

43. *Historia o liber de regno Sicilie,* 109.

44. On this expedition, see Hiroshi Takayama, "*Familares Regis* and the Royal Inner Council in Twelfth-Century Sicily," *English Historical Review* 104 (1989): 363; and John C. Hildt, "The Ministry of Stephen of Perche during the Minority of William II of Sicily," *Smith College Studies in History* 3 (1918): 141–86.

45. *Ep.* 131, *PL* 207, 390; *Ep.* 72, 224. On the family of Stephen of Perche, see Kathleen Thompson, *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France: The County of the Perche, 1000–1226* (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2002), esp. 78–103.

46. *La historia o liber de regno Sicilie,* 142–53, 160–61, trans. Loud and Wiedemann, 208–14, 218; J. C. Hildt, "The Ministry of Stephen of Perche," 181–86.

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him convalescing in the household of the archbishop of Salerno at the time of the revolt.[47] His visit to Salerno brought him into contact with yet another major center of learning, the great medical school of that city, and it was perhaps here that Peter learned the medical terminology that he employed in a letter detailing his method for treating the same sort of "median ague" he had himself suffered.[48] From Salerno Peter traveled by sea, under protection of King William II of Sicily, to Genoa, whence he made his way back to France, probably by way of Rome.[49] In the following years Peter had nothing good to say about Sicily, and he rejoiced to his brother William of Blois, who also accompanied the expedition, at his return to *"dulcia Francia."* William stayed on in Sicily for some time as abbot of Mantina, a position Peter persuaded him to give up as illicitly acquired.[50] Most of the details Peter provides concern his role at the Palermo court, though he adds little to our understanding of the palace and urban revolts there. The disaster of the French clerks in Palermo indicates some of the perils, and perhaps deficiencies, of the Paris-centered clerical culture to which Peter belonged. Despite their often prodigious learning and administrative acumen, they could not win over the locals of Palermo and Messina. Peter himself made no comment on Sicily's complex and multicultural political framework, with its unique blend of Greek, Arabic, and Latin influences.[51] Perhaps things would make more sense back in France.

Rouen and Canterbury

The clergy of northwestern Europe, however, were caught up in the climactic stages of the Becket conflict, which occupies a prominent place in Peter's letter collection. Southern saw this as the lowest point in his career, a time of uncertainty and desperation when he was "without friends," but Peter does seem already to have made some significant contacts.[52] He wrote to John of Salisbury on the exile of Archbishop Thomas, in a letter

47. *Ep.* 90, *PL* 207, 282.

48. *Ep.* 43, *PL* 207, 126. For a discussion and partial translation, see Urban T. Holmes and Frederick R. Wheedon, "Peter of Blois as a Physician," *Speculum* 37 (1962): 252–56. See also *Later Letters,* no. 6, 41.

49. *Ep.* 90, 282–83. On the evidence for a Roman sojourn at this point, see Türk, *Pierre de Blois: Ambitions et remords,* 113.

50. *Ep.* 93, *PL* 207, 291–93.

51. Hiroshi Takayama, "Central Power and Multi-Cultural Elements at the Norman Court of Sicily," *Mediterranean Studies* 12 (2003): 1–15.

52. Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 112.

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purporting to be from 1169 or 1170.[53] Around the same time he reported, in an apologetic letter to Becket's *familiares*, that he had allied himself with Reginald de Bohun, one of the archbishop's bitterest opponents. In Reginald Peter found a distinguished, influential, and potentially dangerous patron. He had initially served in Becket's household in 1162, but soon moved on to Paris where he studied letters and became involved in the court of Louis VII.[54] Louis rewarded the young clerk's service by appointing him abbot of the abbey of St. Exuperius at Corebeil.[55] Peter and Reginald, both of whom corresponded with Pope Alexander III, presumably met in the schools of Paris, and Peter describes Reginald rather like a pupil.[56] Through a series of letters to and about Reginald, Peter defended the rising star, but whether they traveled together during this period is unknown.[57] In any case, Reginald provided Peter with a link between the schools of Paris and the world of the Anglo-Norman clergy.

Peter also had a contact with the family of the late Stephen of Perche, including Archbishop Rotrou of Rouen. He could well have resumed his association with Rotrou in the late 1160s, although he does not appear in any known Rouen documents dated before 1172, and may have been back at Paris.[58] Shortly before that time Peter had written to Reginald's father, Jocelin, whose nephews he had apparently expected to teach, but they never arrived and so caused their would-be tutor some degree of financial hardship.[59] Letter 101, also on the subject of training nephews of a prominent ecclesiastic (in this case the archdeacon of Nantes), outlines his plan for a boy's education, suggesting Peter worked in the world of the Parisian masters.[60] There is little evidence, however, to support Stephen Ferruolo's claim that in the early 1170s "Peter tried, again unsuccessfully, to attract enough students to his lectures on the trivium."[61] The letters on the education of powerful clerics' nephews show, above all,

53. *Ep.* 22, *PL* 207, 77–82.

54. For details of Reginald's life, see Charles Duggan, "Reginald fitzJocelin," in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 46:371–72; and *Fasti IV: Salisbury*, ed. Diana E. Greenway (London: Institute of Historical Research, 1991), 34–35.

55. Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells* (London, 1914), 2:574.

56. *Ep.* 24, *PL* 207, 86–88.

57. See below, chapter 2.

58. Peter attests a charter for Rotrou in that year (Archives of Calvados, H 1842, cited in Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 112). See also below, chapter 4.

59. *Ep.* 51, *PL* 207, 154–57.

60. *Ep.* 101, *PL* 207, 311–14. Also see Lynn Thorndyke, trans., *University Records and Life in the Middle Ages* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1944), 15–17. This letter is discussed in chapter 3, below.

61. Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, 158.

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that teaching was subject to the same pressures of patronage as all other aspects of clerical experience, but they do not prove that Peter ultimately threw up his hands and gave up teaching in a huff. Still, he implied that he was conscious of a distinct career change from scholar to ecclesiastical servant when he wrote that William of the White Hands, archbishop of Sens, called him out of the *castra scholaria* to take a position at Chartres (the position that he apparently never assumed, thanks to the slanders of his detractors).[62]

It is possible, then, that Peter spent time in Paris teaching the pupils referred to above, but by 1172, now in his late thirties or early forties, he was in Rouen writing letters on behalf of Archbishop Rotrou. He now found himself firmly in the orbit of Anglo-Norman ecclesiastical politics. As a member of Rotrou's household, Peter may have had dealings with Reginald when Rotrou and Reginald negotiated with Becket in 1169, and it is clear that Reginald himself had significant connections to the Norman church.[63]

Although he held no office in the cathedral at Rouen, Peter did receive a prebend there, possibly in 1172 and certainly by 1179, and he appears in the church's necrology.[64] He cannot have been resident at Rouen often after 1174, but he did manage to get himself into a quarrel with another canon, a certain G. Burnell, for an entry in a cathedral document reads "these are the pledges of all the chattels that G. Burnell has toward master Peter of Blois for the wrong which he did him," and lists four names. The same document names Peter as one of several who "according to the common deliberation of all owed money for the construction of the chapter house."[65] The chapter of Rotrou provided prebends to several prominent ecclesiastics during the period, so regardless of his precise duties with Rotrou, he had clearly entered an important and complex network of power and patronage.

He may have been brought into Rotrou's *familia* simply to do what

62. "Cum dominus Senonensis me vocasset a scholari militia . . .": *Ep.* 72, *PL* 207, 221.

63. Reginald's uncle Richard (d. 1179) had been the dean of Bayeux before becoming bishop of Coutances. See David Spear, "Power, Patronage and Personality in the Norman Cathedral Chapters, 911–1204," *Anglo Norman Studies* 20 (1997): 205–21, here at 214.

64. On the date for Peter becoming a canon at Rouen, see *Fasti VII: Bath and Wells,* ed. Diana E. Greenway (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2000), 28; and Spear, "Les chanoines," 147. For Peter's defense of his prebend at Rouen from the designs of his nephews, see *Later Letters,* nos. 25 and 27. For the necrology entry, see *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France,* ed. M. Bouquet (Paris, 1894), 23:364.

65. J. H. Round, *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France, Illustrative of the History of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. 1: A.D. 918–1206* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1899), 13.

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he did best, that is, to write letters. Six of the letters that he circulated at one time or another in his letter collection bear Rotrou's name. All of these treat pressing affairs of high politics and are addressed to important figures. Peter's clerical world had grown, and he now could witness ecclesiastical high politics firsthand. In 1172, when we know from charter evidence that Peter traveled with Rotrou, several of Peter's friends, contacts, and patrons, including Reginald, cardinal Albert of Morra (an old school friend of Peter's then working as a papal legate), and Rotrou himself (along with Reginald) negotiated the compromise at Avranches that granted Henry absolution for his role in Thomas Becket's murder.[66]

By 1174, Peter was working in England. He asserts that Henry II himself invited him there, and this might not be a mere boast, since the kings of England had long brought favored ecclesiastical servants across the Channel.[67] J. A. Robinson supposed that Peter came to England under the patronage of Reginald of Salisbury, which is possible, though there is no documentary or epistolary evidence for this.[68] Some reasonable conjectures about his arrival in England can be made through a consideration of Henry II's itinerary in the years 1173–1174. The probable dates of Peter's letters for Rotrou suggests that he was in attendance on the archbishop for the latter half of 1173 and probably early 1174, when he begins appearing in the charter subscription lists of Richard of Dover, the new archbishop of Canterbury.[69] Sometime during the intervening period, then, Peter entered the archbishop's service. Amidst a flurry of appointments, Richard had been picked to succeed Becket at Canterbury, while Peter's intermittent patron, Reginald, received the see of Bath. Richard frequented Henry's Norman headquarters at Rouen during the summer of 1173, while Rotrou was one of the king's most reliable supporters, having absolved the anti-Becket bishops several years earlier.[70] During this period, four men who would profoundly influence Peter's career—the king himself, Reginald, Rotrou, and Richard of Dover—were all active in or pass-

66. Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 260.

67. *Ep.* 127, *PL* 207, 149; David S. Spear, "The Norman Empire and the Secular Clergy, 1066–1204," *Journal of British Studies* 21 (1982): 1–10.

68. Robinson, "Peter of Blois," in *Somerset Historical Essays* (London, 1921), 108.

69. *EAA 2: Canterbury 1162–1190,* ed C. R. Cheney and Bridgett E. A. Jones (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1986), nos. 56, 68, 75, 82, 93, 120, 131, 132, 174, 198, 199, 220.

70. R. W. Eyton, *Court, Household and Itinerary of King Henry II* (London, 1878), 178; David Knowles, *The Episcopal Colleagues of Archbishop Thomas Becket* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 100–101, 104, 114; Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 189–91, 201–2.

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ing through upper Normandy. In late summer 1174, Henry crossed the Channel to relieve Rouen, which was under siege by the French king.[71] At the same time Reginald and Richard, traveling together from Rome after successfully appealing to the pope for consecration, traversed Normandy and met with the royal court.[72] Peter of Blois's precise status during this period cannot be determined, since he did not attest any known extant royal or episcopal documents during these years. In October 1174, Rotrou attended Henry's court, but Peter may have already been with Archbishop Richard by that time, since the *termini post quem* for the Canterbury charters witnessed by Peter are as early as April 1174.

This period in Peter's life suggests that the ecclesiastical world of the Angevin Empire was more unified than some scholars have allowed.[73] He held prebends on both sides of the Channel for the rest of his life and beseeched Norman and English ecclesiastics alike for support. When he called attention to his ignorance of the English language and recoiled at the taste of beer while praising French wine, he recognized that the Channel could be a cultural barrier of sorts, but for the purposes of his career it was a remarkably porous one.[74] He belonged to a clerical community serving at least in part at the pleasure of the king, following the court and pursuing prebends and ecclesiastical positions throughout the realm.

Peter stayed in Richard's household throughout his tenure of the see, and received the title of archiepiscopal chancellor *(cancellarius)* around 1182 or 1183.[75] He included six letters on behalf of Richard in his collection, but tells us little about the events of his own life. In 1179, he attended the Third Lateran Council on Richard's behalf, and familiarized himself with the canons promulgated there well enough to use them later in a dispute with Reginald of Salisbury concerning his rights as archdeacon of Bath, an honor he received by 1182.[76] His presence in Rome also re-

71. Warren, *Henry II*, 136; Eyton, *Itinerary of Henry II*, 184.

72. Ibid.; *EAA 2*, 279; Ralph de Diceto, *Ymagines historiarum*, RS 68.1, 391.

73. The debate over the ecclesiastical unity of the realm is succinctly summarized in Spear, "The Norman Empire and the Secular Clergy," 2–4. Cf. Martin Brett, *The English Church under Henry I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); and Raymonde Foreville, "The Synod of the Province of Rouen in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to C. R. Cheney on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. C. N. L. Brooke et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 19–39. See also Donald Matthew, *Britain and the Continent 1000–1300: The Impact of the Norman Conquest* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), 95–119.

74. For Peter's ignorance of English, see *Later Letters*, no. 42, pp. 194–96, and no. 80, pp. 335–38. For the praise of wine, see his poem *Felix ille locus*, in *Petri Blesenis Carmina*, no. 1.6, p. 277.

75. *EAA 2*, xxv–xxvi.

76. *Ep.* 58, *PL* 207, 172–75; for Peter as archdeacon of Bath, see *Fasti VII*, 28–29 and *EAA 10*:

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flects his work as Richard's advocate before the papal curia, where he later unsuccessfully prosecuted a case against the monastery of St. Augustine's in Canterbury. During this stay at the papal court, Peter acquired a profound distaste for its denizens and wrote to that other famous critic of Rome, John of Salisbury, to share his revulsion.[77] He racked up a considerable debt there, earning Archbishop Richard a rebuke from Pope Lucius III for his chancellor's profligacy (deemed sufficiently serious to earn a place in the decretals).[78]

Given his duties at Canterbury and extended stays in Rome, Peter must have held his archdeaconry as a frequent absentee, though he does record one ill-fated visitation of the churches entrusted to him in the 1190s.[79] His designated vice-archdeacon had poor relations with Bishop Reginald, and the documentary evidence from Bath shows that other cathedral clergy there performed archidiaconal duties.[80] In addition, one "Master Godfrey" subscribed to several of Reginald's *acta* as archdeacon of Bath, and so may have taken Peter's place during the latter's absences.[81] During these periods, Peter instead attended to the archbishop's business at Canterbury, where Peter kept busy, attesting thirty-seven of Richard's extant *acta*. In a majority of these documents he appears first or second on the witness list, suggesting that he played a prominent role in the archbishop's household.[82]

As a dignitary in Richard's *familia*, Peter was de facto a royal functionary, though he held no official position in Henry II's household. Occasionally he worked with Henry's *curiales*, listened to their gossip, and became close enough to the monarch to begin dedicating tracts and, eventually, his letter collection, to him.[83] By the early 1190s, and probably before Henry's death in 1189, Peter became the dean of the king's chapel at Wolverhampton, a relatively rich foundation that royal clerks would hold for centuries—clearly Henry found Peter useful in some respects,

Bath and Wells, 1061–1205, ed. Frances M. R. Ramsey (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1995), Appendix 3, p. 217.

77. *Ep.* 158, *PL* 207, 452–53.

78. *Liber Extra*, 3.22.3, in *Corpus juris canonici*, ed. E. Friedburg (1879–1881), 2:530–31.

79. *Ep.* 29, *PL* 207, 98–100.

80. On Peter's vice-archdeacon, see *Ep.* 58, *PL* 207, 172–75.

81. *EEA 10*, nos. 69, 154–56, 161, and p. 217; see also *Fasti VII*, 28.

82. For Peter attesting first or second in witness lists, see *EAA* 2, nos. 56, 57, 59, 68, 70, 75, 82, 93, 94, 104, 113, 114, 122, 131, 132, 134, 126, 137, 138, 147, 163, 171.

83. In addition to the letter collection, Peter dedicated *Compendium in Job* and the lost *De praestigiis fortunae* to Henry. Peter also made Henry one of the interlocutors in his *Dialogus inter regem Henricum secundum at abbatem Bonevallis*. The *De praestigiis* is referred to in *Epp.* 4, 19, and 77, and Peter places it in his list of writings in the tract *Invectiva in depravatorem*, PL 207, 1115.

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and his connections were starting to pay off.[84] For example, the Pipe Roll for 1186–1187 records the following pensions:

> And to Master David of London, 10 pounds, which he collects annually for the archdeaconry of Middlesex. And to Master Peter of Blois, 20 shillings each half-year, which he was accustomed to receive from the chamber of the bishop, by writ of Ranulf de Glanville, in place of the three marks which he had been receiving annually.[85]

This income, which is repeated in the Rolls for 1187–1188 and 1188–1189, implies that Peter was firmly in the circle of the bishop of London, Gilbert Foliot, who died in 1187, alongside the one-time Becket nemesis Master David.[86] Peter, then, worked in prestigious and important company, even though (like David) he lacked a formal, named position in an ecclesiastical or royal *familia*.[87] He was a "master," a dignitary, and as such was rewarded for service and loyalty.

The extant royal *acta* similarly shed little light on Peter's relationship with Henry. It is also possible that Peter traveled with the king around this time, and he witnessed four documents datable to between 1180 and 1185. Between 1180 and 1182 he was with the king at Bur-leRoi, and similarly traveled in the royal entourage on the Continent in 1183: on 8 March, he witnessed a charter for Henry II in Poitiers, without Archbishop Richard. At some point in 1184–1185, precisely the period when Peter compiled his letter collection and dedicated it to Henry, and possibly after Richard's death, he subscribed to a grant Henry made to the church of Bredgar in Kent. His name also appears on Henry's confirmation of a

84. Dorothy Styles, "The Early History of the King's Chapels in Staffordshire," *Transactions and Proceedings of the Birmingham Archaeological Society* 60 (1936): 56–95; *A History of the County of Stafford,* ed. M. W. Greenslade and J. G. Jenkins, The Victoria History of the Counties of England (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Historical Research, 1967), 3:321–31.

85. "Et magistro David de Londonio .x *l.* quas percipit annuatim de archidiaconatu de Middelsexa. Et Magistro Petro Blesensi .xx *s.* de dimidio anno quos consuevit percipere de camera episcopi per breve Ranulfi de Glanuill' de .iij. *m.* quod attulit annuatim percipiendum": *Great Roll of the Pipe for the Thirty-Third Year of the Reign of King Henry the Second, A.D. 1186–1187,* Pipe Roll Society 37 (London: St Catherine Press, 1915), 29.

86. *Great Roll of the Pipe for the Thirty-Fourth Year of the Reign of Henry the Second, A.D. 1187–1188,* Pipe Roll Society 38 (London: Hereford Times, 1925), 11; *Great Roll of the Pipe for the First Year of the Reign of King Richard the First, A.D. 1189–1190* (London: Eyre & Spotswoode, 1844), 12.

87. On Master David of London, see Z. N. Brooke, "The Register of Master David of London, and the Part He Played in the Becket Crisis," in *Essays in History Presented to Reginald Lane Poole,* ed. H. W. C. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 227–45; and Adrian Morey and C. N. L. Brooke, *Gilbert Foliot and His Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 198–233, passim.

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grant to Llanthony priory around the same time.[88] This represents the best, most direct evidence available that Peter in fact traveled in Henry's company. But it does not prove that he in any sense enjoyed special intimacy with the king.

Archbishop Richard died in 1184, but Peter stayed in Canterbury during the reign of his successor, the Cistercian Baldwin of Ford. Between archiepiscopal administrations Peter may have found time to reflect upon his career and writings to date, and to assemble, for the first time, his letter collection. Southern has argued that Richard's death sent Peter into a deep crisis over his future.[89] While Peter was expert at describing himself in dire straits, such a characterization may overstate his plight. He certainly continued to indulge his habit of deluging superiors with not-so-subtle hints that he needed a better job, but the letters purporting to be from this period do not betray an excessive degree of desperation. Furthermore, it was not unusual at Canterbury for clerks to stay on from one administration to the next; in addition to Peter, Henry of Northampton and Ralph de Sancto Martino attested numerous charters under both Richard and his immediate successor, Baldwin.[90] During the previous change of administration at Canterbury, Gerard Pucelle and Alexander Walensis had retained their positions in the archbishop's household.[91] Perhaps, as some have suggested, he turned to his letter collection as an exercise in self-promotion intended to curry favor, but there does not seem to be any significant precedent for using a letter collection to advance such a scheme.

Although Peter did not retain the title of chancellor under Baldwin (who employed John of Exeter in that position),[92] he may have had even more influence on Canterbury affairs under Baldwin, and he had con-

88. These charters will appear in *The Acta of King Henry II 1154–1189,* ed. Nicholas Vincent, J. C. Holt and Judith Everard, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, forthcoming). The Bur-le-Roi charter, involving a settlement between the chapter of Bayeux and Robert de Isigny, is no. 151. The Poitiers charter, confirming a settlement between Richard of Dover and the monks of St. Augustine's, is no. 484; the grant for Bredgar is no. 497; and the grant to Llanthony priory is no. 1614. On Peter of Blois as a charter witness, see Nicholas Vincent, "Henry II and the Poitevins," in *La Cour Plantagenêt (1154–1204), Actes du colloque tenu à Thouars du 30 avril au 2 mai 1999,* ed. Martin Aurell (Poitiers: Université de Poitiers, 2000), 107–8.

89. Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 107, 109.

90. For Henry, see *EAA 2,* nos. 49, 66, 96, 114, 184, 237, 238, 240, 248, 249, 264, 267, 273, 281, 283, 291, 296, 307, 311, 312, 313, 314, 323; for Ralph, see *EAA 2,* nos. 56, 58, 59, 75, 82, 95, 96, 104, 117, 131, 132, 136, 145, 154, 168, 174, 199, 202, 220, 233, 238, 259, 262, 267, 268, 281, 287, 290, 294, 295, 297A, 298, 300, 302, 303, 304, 306, 325, 521, 632.

91. *EAA 2,* xxiv.

92. Ibid., xxvi.

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siderable responsibilities as an advocate and letter writer. His name appears in the subscription lists for sixteen of Baldwin's charters, and four of Peter's collected letters were written in Baldwin's name.[93] The gentle Cistercian prelate may have broadened Peter's cultural world as well. Around this time Peter also added a letter in praise of monastic orders, and many of Peter's writings convey spiritual ideals associated with the White Monks.[94] He also continued to write works ostensibly for King Henry. In the midst of these spiritual and literary pursuits, other professional obligations now pressed even more heavily.

For Peter now became notorious as the lawyer who sought to impose the will of the king and the archbishop on Christ Church, the monastic chapter of Thomas Becket's former cathedral at Canterbury. Because of the ensuing dispute, one can glimpse Peter from the perspective of sources outside his letter collection, and hostile ones at that.[95] Baldwin and Henry II had rehatched an old scheme to found a collegiate church at Hackington, on the outskirts of Canterbury. This episode demonstrates the possibilities and dilemmas of twelfth-century clerical culture, for the church would have been a college of the clerical elite from which the king and the archbishop could direct ecclesiastical policy for the province. It would have provided incomes for Henry's favorite clerks and, perhaps more controversially, could have been used to sidestep the monastic chapter in electoral decisions and the administration of the diocese. It is also possible that the allegedly lax monastic observance of the monks had frustrated Baldwin, an austere Cistercian. For a learned cleric like Peter the plan must have seemed perfect, and he pursued the subsequent legal case with a certain bumbling vigor. He appears as a relentless villain in the letters of the Christ Church monks, one of whom, the historian Gervase, went so far as to claim that Peter of Blois, who opposed them at Canterbury and before the pope in Rome, was "the shameless author of this whole evil."[96] The monastic chapter saw a threat in the ambitions of

93. The charters for Baldwin are found in *EAA* 2, nos. 237, 298–99, 269, 270, 271, 273, 278, 295, 297, 298, 311, 320, 323; the letters are *Epp.* 82, 96, 98, 99.

94. *Ep.* 97, *PL* 207, 304–6.

95. On the running dispute between archbishop and chapter, see C. R. Cheney, *Hubert Walter* (London: Nelson, 1967), 135–57, and *From Becket to Langton: English Church Government 1170–1213* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1956), 4, 92–92; Henry Mayr-Harting, "Henry II and the Papacy, 1170–1189," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 16 (1965): 45–46; Margaret Gibson, "Normans and Angevins 1070–1220," in *A History of Canterbury Cathedral*, ed. Patrick Collinson et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 66–67; and William Stubbs, introduction to *Chronicles and Memorials of the Reign of Richard I, Part I: Epistolae Cantuarienses,* Rolls Series 38 (London, 1865) (hereafter referred to as *Epp. Cant.*).

96. "totius fere hujus malitiae artifex impudicus": Gervase of Canterbury, *Chronica*, ed. Wil-

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the seculars, and Peter was the most visible face of that threat. Their portrait of him is strikingly consistent with the one that can be gleaned from his letters, as is evident from a speech to the pope that Gervase attributes to the conniving archdeacon of Bath:

> My lord, this of both urgent necessity and great utility. For the church of Canterbury is marvelously sublime and glorious, and so it greatly requires the aid of the wisdom of clerics, who are more prudent and experienced than monks when it comes to conducting business [*in expendis negotiis prudentiories monachis existent et exercitatiores*].[97]

Perhaps this speech is just what Gervase expected to hear from a bullying secular clerk, but Peter actually did have a lofty conception of the value of clerks for the kingdom, and he would have been careful enough to frame this conception in terms friendly to the reform movement when speaking to the Supreme Pontiff.

In all, three popes played a part in the dispute during Baldwin's reign. The first, Urban III, once a fellow student of Peter's, was for the most part sympathetic to the monks, but he died in October 1187, not at all to Peter's dismay.[98] Albert of Morra, whom Peter also regarded as a friend from his school days, ascended the papal throne as Gregory VIII and took Baldwin's side; in the wake of his accession the latter felt comfortable excommunicating several of the monks. Gregory, however, soon passed on in his turn, leaving it to Clement III to reaffirm Urban's support of the chapter. The matter seemed more or less settled against the designs of Henry, Baldwin, and Peter when the Third Crusade intervened. Baldwin's successor tinkered with the scheme again, but Peter participated in no further litigation.

The news of the annihilation of the Christian armies at the Battle of Hattin in 1187 reached the papal curia just as Peter of Blois argued Baldwin's case there, and quickly led to calls for a crusade, to which Peter eagerly lent his voice and his pen. He gathered materials for a series of crusader tracts in Italy, but he was soon back in England, accompanying Baldwin for at least part of his well-known preaching tour of Wales. We know this from one of the more intriguing bits of charter evidence for Peter's participation in the world of educated writers orbiting the king

liam Stubbs, RS 73.1, 354; John D. Cotts, "The Critique of the Secular Clergy in Peter of Blois and Nigellus de Longchamps," *Haskins Society Journal* 13 (2004 for 1999): 137–50.

97. Gervase, *Chronica*, 368.

98. *Epistolae Cantuarienses,* no. 135, pp. 107–8. This letter, in which Peter and his colleague William of St. Faith gloat over Urban III's death, is included among the letters of the Christ Church monks but not in Peter's letter collection.

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and the archbishop. In the spring of 1188, Baldwin confirmed an award of the bishop of Gloucester. Gerald of Wales, Baldwin's guide on his preaching tour, subscribed first on the grant, and Peter of Blois subscribed immediately after Gerald, marking the only time he signed a document with that writer whose career has so much in common with his.[99] This confirmation places Peter in the throng of clerks in Baldwin's train as he traveled around Wales from Hereford, perhaps as a member of the *legatio* to whom Baldwin allegedly read part of Gerald's *Topographia Hibernica* each night.[100]

Peter's role on the crusade itself is much more difficult to determine. Without doubt he took the crusade very seriously and wrote four tracts advocating its speedy embarkation for the Holy Land. In his *Dialogus inter abbatem Bonnavellensem et Henricum secundum*, Peter presented the crusade as the solution to the king's considerable dilemmas (both spiritual and political), but Henry died in May 1189, before he could fulfill his vow.[101] Eight years later, Peter himself described his situation in 1189 as follows:

> When I was deeply troubled by the death of our most illustrious king, I was besieged by grief to the point that I would have left England behind for other lands, if the most gracious and welcome friendship [*familiaritas*] of the lords of Worcester and Durham, and the latter's archdeacons who were then living there, had not rescued me from all danger of abandonment.[102]

This letter makes no mention of the crusade, on which Peter would have embarked within a year of Henry's death. One can only guess at how the "lords of Worcester and Durham" aided Peter. Hugh de Puiset, a cousin of Odo de Sully to whom Peter wrote the account of his plight after Henry's death, was the princely bishop of Durham at the time, and would become royal justiciar for northern England. Whatever the nature of his relationship with Peter was, Hugh saw fit to include a copy of Peter's letters in his considerable library.[103] The bishop of Worcester would have been William of Northal, whom Gervase places with Peter in Archbish-

99. *EAA* 2, no. 276, pp. 236–37.

100. Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Kambriae*, ed. James F. Dimock, RS 21.6 (London, 1868), 20.

101. The dialogue is published in *Serta mediaevalia*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, CCCM 171 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 377–408.

102. *Ep.* 127, *PL* 207, 379.

103. *Wills and Inventories Illustrative of the History, Manners, Language, Statistics, &c., of the Northern Counties of England from the Eleventh Century Downward*, ed. James Raine (London, 1835), 1:3–4, cited in G. V. Scammell, *Hugh de Puiset: Bishop of Durham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 103–4.

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op Richard's *familia* in 1183, and who would have had only a few months to help Peter after Henry's death, since he himself died in May 1190.[104]

According to a letter that Peter wrote to William de Longchamps, he left England with the new king, Richard I, which would have been at the end of 1189, a few months before Baldwin left for the Continent and thence to the Holy Land for the Crusade.[105] It is entirely possible that Peter himself joined Baldwin before the gates of Acre in 1190 and stayed there at least until the archbishop's death that autumn. Peter never described his experiences on his journey with King Richard, nor does he provide any details of Baldwin's work on the crusade, but once in his crusading tract *Passio Reginaldi*, in an account of the death of Reginald of Châtillon, Peter suggests he had firsthand knowledge of events there.[106] The most recent editor of that work has determined that Peter's presence in the Holy Land can be accepted.[107] At any rate, if Peter did not accompany his archbishop, it is not known what he did during this period. No Canterbury *acta* include his name until the mid-to late-1190s, and his whereabouts become clear again only around 1191–1192.

New Patrons

New personalities appeared in the address clauses of Peter's letter collection at this time. Baldwin and Henry were dead, and with the new king on crusade, political controversy centered on the administrators charged with running the realm in his absence. Peter no longer had any great love for Reginald of Salisbury, who had taken the side of the Christ Church monks when Baldwin had tried to circumvent their authority.[108] When the monks elected Reginald archbishop in 1191, Peter regarded it as the uncanonical elevation of a scoundrel (Reginald died before consecration).[109] He had moved on to cultivate a friendship with the new chancellor, William de Longchamps, bishop of Ely, whose assistance he sought with some problems arising at his deanery at Wolverhampton. In

104. Gervase, *Chronica*, 306; Peter attested Baldwin's confirmation of a grant made by William in 1188, *EAA 2*, no. 276.

105. *Ep.* 87, *PL* 207, 273.

106. See *Passio Reginaldi* in *Petri Blesensis Tractatus Duo*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, CCCM 194 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 51; and Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, 2:201–2, and "Peter of Blois and the Third Crusade," in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. H. C. Davis*, ed. Henry Mayr-Harting and R. I. Moore (London and Ronceverte: Hambledon Press, 1985), 207–18, here at 216. Cf. Huygens, introduction to *Petri Blesensis Tractatus Duo*, 19.

107. Huygens, introduction to *Petri Blesensis Tractatus Duo*, 19–21.

108. *EAA 10*, nos. 102–3, pp. 76–78.

109. *Later Letters*, no. 53; see also *MTB*, 7:543–44.

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Letter 108 he appealed to William, still at the height of his power, "not for gold or for money, but for the grace of intercession to the king."[110] This suggests that Peter was back within the Angevin domains attending to business by 1191. By the next year, Longchamps had made so many enemies and aroused such jealousy among the English episcopate that he suffered a spectacular fall from grace and lost the chancellorship. Peter not only consoled the chancellor after his political defeat but savagely criticized Hugh de Nonant, bishop of Coventry, whom he regarded as William's main persecutor, in a letter of 1193.[111] He looked elsewhere for employment: at the end of his letter of consolation, Peter informed William that he had joined the entourage, if not the household, of Queen Eleanor *(ego autem ad dominam reginam me contuli)*, where he would await the resurgence of the bishop's fortunes.[112]

Eleanor would have been a desirable and demanding patroness in the early 1190s, as she entered into a period of frenetic activity.[113] Peter definitely traveled with Eleanor's *familia* at some point between 1192 and 1194, when he attested two of the queen's charters, one at her dower estate of Berkhamstead and another at London.[114] On both occasions Peter attested along with Herbert le Poer, archdeacon of Canterbury, who like Peter seems to have had no formal position in the queen's household. Through the London charter Eleanor vowed to secure Richard I's release from captivity in Austria and made arrangements for defensive measures at Canterbury against a possible invasion from Flanders. Peter, then, attended on the queen as negotiations about Richard's captivity began.

This episode found its way into Peter's corpus through a series of controversial letters. One of these is addressed from Peter to Conrad,

110. "Non aurum a vobis, non pecuniam peto, sed gratiam intercessionis ad regem": *Ep.* 108, *PL* 207, 332.

111. *Ep.* 89, *PL* 207, 278–81.

112. *Ep.* 87, *PL* 207, 276.

113. Marie Hivergneaux, "Aliénor d'Aquitaine: Le pouvoir d'une femme à la lumière de ses chartes (1152–1204)," in *La cour Plantagenêt*, 63–87.

114. These charters will appear in *The Acta of Eleanor of Aquitaine and of Richard Duke of Aquitaine and Count of Poitou*, ed. Nicholas Vincent (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming), nos. 26 and 155. For a published list of Eleanor's charters, see Vincent, "Patronage, Politics and Piety in the Charters of Eleanor of Aquitaine," in *Plantagenêts et Capétiens: Confrontations et heritages*, ed. Martin Aurel and Noël-Yves Tonnere (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 56–60. The Berkhamstead charter is in British Library MS Harley 391, 51v–52, printed in H. G. Richardson, "The Letters and Charters of Eleanor of Aquitaine," *English Historical Review* 74 (1959): 211; the London charter is Canterbury Cathedral Library MS Chartae Antiquae C49, printed in William Somner, *The Antiquities of Canterbury*, 2nd ed. (London: R. Knaplock, 1703), app. 1–2 no. 2, and *Litterae Cantuarienses: The Letter Books of the Monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury*, ed. J. Brigstocke Sheppard (London, 1889), 3:379–80.

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archbishop of Mainz (addressed as an old school friend), and three others purport to be written on Eleanor's behalf to Pope Celestine III.[115] All request intervention to aid Richard. Beatrice A. Lees argued in 1906 that "from the literary point of view they are too tautological and diffuse, from the diplomatic point of view they are too fanciful and unusual, from the historical point of view they are too inaccurate and exaggerated to be genuine."[116] In denying that Peter ever served with Eleanor, however, Lees was apparently unaware of the charters referred to above. More recent scholars, especially Lena Wahlgren and Jean Flori, have continued to argue that the letters represent authentic correspondence, suggesting that Peter was in fact lending his literary talents to the major diplomatic crisis of the year.[117] Flori refers to Peter as Eleanor's *secrétaire*, but nothing in the extant documents or in Peter's own statements corroborates such a strong claim.[118] Given Peter's preexisting ties to Canterbury, London, and men like Hubert Walter, it would have made perfect sense for him to have been in Eleanor's company even if he was not officially in her service. These letters, however, fit somewhat awkwardly into Peter's collection. Even though the charter drawn up at London shows that he was involved in the crisis over Richard's captivity, there is no way of knowing whether his epistolary talents would have been solicited for such a sensitive negotiation. Lees's judgment of the letters' literary characteristics holds up under close reading. The series ought to be considered in light of the stated goal of Peter's collection: to show himself in the "tumult of the court," but their relationship to their purported historical referent must be considered dubious.

How did Peter find himself in the entourage of a woman to whom he had written an indignant letter some twenty years earlier?[119] He may have come into her presence from the entourage of Walter of Coutances. His familiarity with Walter went back at least as far as 1184, when Peter wrote a letter for him, and Walter was frequently in the queen's company in the early 1190s.[120] Walter accompanied Eleanor when she returned

115. *Epp.* 143–46, *PL* 207, 428–34. The last three appear in full in *PL* 206.

116. B. A. Lees, "The Letters of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Pope Celestine III," *English Historical Review* 21 (1906): 91.

117. Jean Flori, *Ailénor d'Aquitaine: La reine insoumise* (Paris: Payot, 2004), 230–35; Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 13–15.

118. Flori, *Ailénor d'Aquitaine: La reine insoumise*, 86.

119. The earlier letter, in which Richard of Dover reminds Eleanor of her uxorial duties to Henry II during the revolt of the Young Henry, is *Ep.* 154, *PL* 207, 448–49.

120. *Ep.* 83, *PL* 207, 255–59. On Eleanor and Walter, see Ralph Turner, "Eleanor of Aquitaine in the Governments of Her Sons Richard and John," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 77–95.

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from Sicily, so it is possible that Peter's familiarity with the new chancellor brought him into Eleanor's court. Whatever the precise nature of these connections, Peter once again found himself in a complex network of patronage in Normandy.

These documentary and epistolary glimpses of Peter during the early 1190s indicate that he was still a cleric of some importance and had contacts at the highest levels of royal and ecclesiastical administration. The letter concerning the deanery of Wolverhampton suggests that Peter was in England during William de Longchamps's chancellorship, which ended in 1191. Peter claimed in his letter of consolation to William (probably 1192) that he had heard slanders against William while he traveled from England with King Richard. While it is nearly impossible to construct his precise itinerary, it seems reasonable to suspect that he operated in a series of circles loosely centered on a few key figures. By the end of this period he had been in contact with Walter of Coutances, William de Longchamps, and Eleanor of Aquitaine, all of whom spent time on the Continent in the early 1190s. He must have drifted about on an ad hoc basis, subsisting on the revenues of his prebends and his archdeaconry, finding work writing letters and doing the same sort of business he had done since the late 1160s. However marginal he might have been, he quite obviously was still a *curialis* despite his claim that by 1184 he had left behind the "waves of the court."[121] As subsequent chapters will show, the court was not easily abandoned.

Peter's itinerary defies confident reconstruction, in part because he tended to frame his life in terms of cycles of illness and repentance rather than in terms of changes in his career, and so his biography, as he tells it, plays out in a series of moral lessons. He did not, however, need to create or exaggerate health problems: a "tertian ague," in all likelihood malaria, had encouraged his departure from the court at Palermo just before civil strife tore it apart in 1167–1168, and he claimed to have left Henry's court around 1184 because of some malady, perhaps another attack of malaria. Now, during this somewhat obscure period in the early 1190s, illness struck again, and he alluded to it twice, both with reference to his work at Canterbury. In an apologetic letter to Christ Church he wrote: "I recognize that lash of the Lord, for just as I stood against you for eight months, so the Lord has for eight months afflicted me with the pain of a grave sickness."[122] Yet this, or perhaps another, illness, may have

121. *Ep.* 14A (Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 145–51).
122. *Ep.* 233, *PL* 207, 535.

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corresponded with a new phase in Peter's career: his work for the next archbishop of Canterbury. In an undated letter to the new archbishop (as of 1195), Hubert Walter, he wrote:

> After the pilgrimage that I undertook [*post peregrinationem quam feci*], it was my wish to come to you and to embrace your command obediently. . . . But I already perceived the preliminary agitations of an imminent and furtive quartan fever [*quartanae insidiantis et imminentis*]; and because I have now suffered its evil continually for two years, I fear that this evil will fall back upon me.[123]

Given the recurrent nature of malaria, he may have still been feeling the effects of his sojourn in Sicily. In any case, Peter was in no condition to "enter the tumult of the court," but he still hoped to join the archbishop soon. Any lingering guilt over his litigation at Rome notwithstanding, Peter did indeed rejoin the archbishop's household. His name appears in Canterbury *acta* after 1195, and he wrote two letters in Hubert's name.[124] He was active in some capacity, witnessing charters and offering advice, and he even claimed that Hubert found his occasional absences from the *familia* troubling.[125]

Two other archbishops played a role in Peter's career at this point, most significantly Walter of Coutances, who had become the most powerful cleric in England after the fall of Longchamps and de facto ruler of the kingdom in King Richard's absence. In 1197 or 1198 Peter added a number of letters to his collection written to Walter and his nephew John (who became bishop of Worcester around this time) and dedicated a tract on episcopal duty to the latter, leading Rolf Köhn to suggest that he compiled a version of the letter collection especially for the archbishop.[126] Also in the 1190s, Peter attested (as the first witness) a charter of Geoffrey Plantagenet, archbishop of York, in whose name he would write letters during the next decade.[127]

123. *Ep.* 109, *PL* 207, 332–33.

124. *Ep.* 122, *PL* 207, 356–58; *Ep.* 135, 403–4.

125. "Nunc etiam dominus Cantuariensis aegre fert absentiam meam, gratatenter acceptat consortium meum, eique videtur honesta et utilis mea conversatio circa eum": *Ep.* 124, *PL* 207, 370; the charters for Hubert are found in *EEA 3: Canterbury 1193–1205*, ed. C. R. Cheney and Eric John (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1986), nos. 365, 369, 372, 394.

126. Köhn, "Autobiographie und Selbstilisierung," 696; on the patronage of Walter and John, see Spear, "Power, Patronage and Personality," 220.

127. *Later Letters*, no. 22, pp. 112–16. Peter had also written in Geoffrey's name in the early 1180s, when Geoffrey was bishop-elect of Lincoln, *Ep.* 62, *PL* 207, 184–86. See also Southern, "Some New Letters of Peter of Blois," *English Historical Review* 53 (1938): 412–24, here at 413. The charter for Geoffrey is found in *EEA 27: York 1189–1212*, ed. Marie Lovatt (Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2004), no. 47, pp. 55–56.

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He was by this time around seventy, and had already been employing the literary topoi associated with advanced age for a number of years.[128] He still pined for France, and around 1197 he begged Odo de Sully, newly elected bishop of Paris, to get him out of England, where he "did not know that language I heard" (Ps. 80:6), and end his wanderings by bringing him home across the Channel.[129] During the 1190s he had received or attempted to receive the patronage of some of the most important people in the Angevin realm. Although he had not received a bishopric, he seems to have been a fixture in the most influential political circles. Perhaps the most significant development in his view was his ordination as a priest (sometime at the end of the decade), which coincided with a trend in his later letters away from administrative matters toward spirituality and theology.[130] He also expressed increasing admiration for the regular clergy, but Peter never took monastic vows, and he continued to fulfill the obligations of a secular cleric and archdeacon.[131] Since most of his contemporaries put off their ordinations to the priesthood until they were required to do so by an elevation to a bishopric, this may represent a tacit acknowledgment that his prospects had ebbed.

Even at this late point in his career, the intrigue and slander of colleagues vexed him as much as ever. In Letter 149 he complains to two friends about his struggle, and in so doing provides a telling summary of the hardships of his career to that point:

> Called to England by King Henry, enriched by the largesse bestowed by him and his sons, and exalted by bishops and archbishops, and all the magnates of the land with every sort of veneration . . . I am now violently expelled from all the honor of my archdeaconry, slandered by a filthy crime. . . . I am given over to contempt and infamy though the cunning of a malignant man.[132]

Once again, Peter asks his readers to observe how a great man has been brought low by slander. It is not clear whether he was deposed or simply dishonored. Although Peter never uses the title of archdeacon of Bath in the address clauses of his later letters, his name does appear with that title in the witness list to a 1206 letter from the dean of Wells Cathedral to the pope announcing the election of Bishop Jocelin.[133] By 1208, the archdeaconry of Bath was held by John of Colchester, so Peter may have resigned the office. The evidence is not entirely clear.

128. As in *Ep.* 109, *PL* 207, 332–333.
129. "linguam quam non noveram audivi": *Later Letters*, no. 80, p. 337.
130. See *Ep.* 123, *PL* 207, 358–67; *Ep.* 139, 413–16.
131. *Later Letters*, no. 80, pp. 335–38.
132. *Ep.* 149, *PL* 207, 439.
133. *Fasti VII*, 120.

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The *Vespera Vitae* in London

What is clear is that sometime between 1199 and 1202 Peter received the archdeaconry of London, where he played an active role in the life of the chapter of St. Paul's while holding the prebend of Hoxton.[134] As archdeacon of London, he continued to travel with Archbishop Hubert Walter from time to time, which is known not only from the documentary evidence of the *acta* but also from an intriguing passage from Gerald of Wales's *De invectionibus*. Gerald was no admirer of Hubert, whom he regarded as an undereducated notary, and in this work he recalled a story in which the archbishop, owing to his poor Latin, did not understand one of Peter's sermons.[135] The theologically sophisticated clerks of Hubert's entourage then had a good laugh at the archbishop's expense. Gerald introduces Peter to convey the learning of the schools, as a man with more pure learning and subtlety than the blundering yet powerful archbishop. Given the number of prominent theologians who ran into trouble at Church councils for writings about the Trinity, Hubert's gaffe would have been especially ghastly to men like Peter and Gerald. It was probably not without satisfaction that Gerald watched a fellow archdeacon, also trained in Paris, embarrass the most important royal servant in the kingdom.

According to Gerald, Peter traveled with Archbishop Hubert after becoming archdeacon of London, and so, despite his relatively advanced age, he still had a role to play in ecclesiastical affairs. His schedule nonetheless did slow down considerably, and his interests centered more and more on his new cathedral chapter. Peter tenaciously protected the dignity of his position as archdeacon, and fought with an ambitious precentor to retain its honor, which by tradition included the stall of second greatest dignity in the choir of St. Paul's.[136] Ultimately, he appealed to Pope Innocent III on this matter, and scored a legal victory when his rights and honors were confirmed on 31 May 1208.[137] Peter still regarded the income of his archidiaconate as wholly inadequate, and he complained to Innocent that "although there are 40,000 men and 122 churches in this city," he

134. *Fasti I: St. Paul's London*, ed. by Diana E. Greenway (London: Institute of Historical Research and the Athlone Press, 1968), 56.

135. Gerald of Wales, *De invectionibus* 1.5, ed. J. S. Brewer, RS 21.3 (London, 1872), 31. This anecdote is discussed below in chapter 4.

136. See Diana E. Greenway, "The Succession to Ralph de Diceto, Dean of St. Paul's," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 39 (1966): 91–92.

137. See Innocent's opinion on the matter in a letter to the bishops of Worcester and Ely: C. R. and M. G. Cheney, eds., *The Letters of Pope Innocent III Concerning England and Wales: A Calendar with an Appendix of Texts* (Oxford, 1967), 258.

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could not manage to extract from it adequate revenues from tithes and other sources.[138]

He also had never become a bishop, even though he twice claimed to have been offered the bishopric of Rochester, which was vacant in 1182 and 1185, only to turn it down (if Peter is to be trusted on this point).[139] But a review of the honors and benefices that had accrued to Peter by this point makes it clear that he had not done too poorly for himself on either side of the Channel. He was still a canon of Chartres, which, though it had ceded its importance in the world of scholarship to Paris, was still a cultural center whose cathedral was beginning to soar. In Normandy Peter held prebends at Rouen and Bayeux, where he might have held the rich benefice of La Mare, and where a fellow canon was the historian Wace, who had also discussed his career prospects in writing.[140] Back in England he was a canon of Ripon and held a prebend at Salisbury; he was still active in the chapter of Bath, perhaps even as an absentee archdeacon, and as archdeacon of London probably held the aforementioned prebend of Hoxton.[141] Peter's hard work and travels were far from unremunerated.

His dedication to preserving the rights of his archidiaconate, along with his detailed assessment of his pecuniary situation in London, suggests that the city was Peter's primary residence in the 1200s. Throughout the final decade of his life he still wrote letters on behalf of prominent churchmen, most notably Geoffrey Plantagenet, archbishop of York.[142] He also bickered endlessly with his nephews, who attempted to deprive him of his inheritance and even, he claims, circulated rumors of his death in order to take over some of his incomes.[143] Despite his periodic im-

138. *Ep.* 151, *PL* 207, 443.

139. "episcopatus quoque Roffensis bis mihi oblatus est": *Ep.* 131, *PL*, 207, 390.

140. The prebend of La Mare would have been quite a rich prize. According to the customary of Bayeux, it "consistet enim in decimis, hominibus, firmis terrarum; et apud Doubram in firmis feodalibus et planis, et habet de jure suo in communia Baiocensi, licet non resideat in ecclesia, centum solidos annuatim. Tenetur tamen facere servicium ecclesiae pro missa et regimine chori, vel penam solvere in ecclesia pro defectu servicii constitutam." The prebend was noted elsewhere in the customary as "quae fuit Petri Blesensis," in an entry that notes, ironically enough, that the prebend was becoming residential: U. Chevalier, *Ordinaire et coutumier de l'église cathédrale de Bayeux* (Paris, 1902), 318, 334–35. On Wace's prebend at Bayeux and his own reference to it, see *The History of the Norman People: Wace's Roman de Rou*, trans. Glyn S. Burgess (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell Press, 2004), xv–xvi, 93; on Wace's "patronage" relationship with Henry II, see Karen M. Broadhurst, "Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine: Patrons of Literature in French?" *Viator* 27 (1996): 56–58.

141. For Ripon, see J. T. Fowler, ed., *Memorials of the Church of SS. Peter and Wilfrid, Ripon*, Publications of the Surtees Society (Durham, 1882), 1:255.

142. See above, n. 127.

143. *Later Letters*, no. 76, pp. 320–23.

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mersion in matters of ecclesiastical politics, Peter turned his mind and his writing decidedly toward spiritual and theological concerns. He filled his later letters with Scholastic discussions of doctrinal subjects such as the Eucharist, many of which depend on the writings of Peter Lombard and associated theologians active a good half-century earlier. Southern reasonably speculated that these discussions represent the delayed transcription of "lecture notes" taken years before, rescued from obscurity by an aged and bored archdeacon.[144] Peter may have also felt the lingering influence of his former master Baldwin, since his later letters praise the Cistercian order. His last treatise, *De amicitia Christiana et de dilectione Dei et proximi*, is steeped in Cistercian ideas on love. Indeed, Peter borrowed liberally, and occasionally verbatim, from the writings of Aelred of Rievaulx in this work.[145] His clerical world now included many elements of monastic culture, and he wrote an increasingly high percentage of his letters to monks.

Despite his spiritual leanings and occasional outbursts of contempt for the world, Peter remained active and in tune with political developments. In 1208, Pope Innocent III placed England under interdict in the course of his dispute with King John, and at that time the properties connected with Peter's Ripon canonry were confiscated. Like many other clergy, he went to France, from which he still regarded himself an exile.[146] He also wrote two letters on behalf of his chapter at St. Paul's discussing ways of managing affairs during the interdict in 1209.[147] While in exile he visited Sens and Chartres.[148] Even after almost forty years, he continued to make overtures to the place he always regarded as his spiritual home, where flatterers and place-seekers had once damaged his reputation.

The latest date at which he can be definitively placed in London is near the beginning of the interdict in 1208 or 1209, and it is possible that he did not return from the trip that took him to Chartres and Sens. Wherever he may have been, Peter of Blois died by the end of 1211. The Chartres necrology commemorates him on 30 November 1211, while that of Rouen does so the following June, which may be merely coincident with his saint's day.[149] A document from the St. Paul's archives mentions

144. "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 109.

145. This problem is discussed in chapter 6, below.

146. A Close Roll of 1208 orders that Peter's goods at Ripon be returned to him. See *Rotuli Literrarum Clausarum in Turri Londoniensi Asservati*, vol. 1, ed. T. D. Hardy (London, 1837), 108b.

147. *Later Letters*, nos. 20 and 24, pp. 109–11, 118–21.

148. *Later Letters*, no. 13, pp. 70–79.

149. *Cartulaire de Notre Dame de Chartres*, ed. E. de Lépinois and L. Merlet (Chartres, 1862–1865), 3:215; *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, vol. 23, ed. M. Bouquet (Paris, 1894), 364; Revell, introduction to *Later Letters*, xxviii. The various possibilities for the place and

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an agreement between two citizens of London to build a wall to mark off their properties "ad mediam quadragesimam proximam postquam Magister Petrus Blesensis mortuus fuit."[150] This would mean his death was known in London by early February 1212. Had he died in France, the news might not have traveled so quickly.

His death inspired a few additional documents. Perhaps it is a measure of Peter's relative financial success (which he never would have admitted) that he had obtained possessions of interest to others: a Close Roll entry of 20 May 1212, includes directives granting full rights to Peter's executors to dispose of his property.[151] Peter's chattels thus were disposed of—it is not known whether his eager nephews received anything when he finally died. Some of his worldly effects, however, remained in the possession of his fellow canons of St. Paul's, where a remarkable inventory of 1245 identifies some of his vestments. "The morse of Peter of Blois," reads one entry, "is silver-gilt and has a red cameo in the center along with other gems, and is adorned all around with pearls."[152] The cope that the morse accompanied was made of red samite with a cross formed of flowers, edged about with "angels without names."[153] On the hood, "Archdeacon of London" was written in pearls.[154] He must have looked splendid (and, for that matter, successful) when he wore them, and his successors may well have assumed that they were the property of an important official.

Eventually, these physical traces disappeared, and we might know about Peter only from those Canterbury witness lists and the hostile fuming of Gervase, but for the fact that vestments and hoods were not the only things that interested the men of St. Paul's in particular, or the literate elite of Europe in general. Sometime before his death in 1313, Robert Baldock, bishop of London, bequeathed to the cathedral a copy of Peter of Blois's letter collection.[155]

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date of Peter's date are discussed in Türk, *Pierre de Blois: Ambitions et remords*, 557, where the issue is not settled, though Türk thinks it likely that Peter died in England.

150. Revell, introduction to *Later Letters*, xxix, citing London Guildhall MS 25122/10.

151. *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum*, 1:117b.

152. Sparrow Simpson, "Two Inventories of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, London," *Archaeologia* 50 (1887): 481.

153. Ibid., 488.

154. Ibid., 483.

155. *Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Ninth Report* (London, 1883), Appendix 1, 46b. Peter's *Epistolae* are listed just before certain *Quaestiones* of St. Bonaventure.

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Catholic University of America Press

Chapter Title: The Archdeacon and His Letters

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma
Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century
Book Author(s): John D. Cotts
Published by: Catholic University of America Press. (2009)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.7

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2 *The Archdeacon and His Letters*

One can only guess what the canons of St. Paul's thought of the author they found in the manuscript Bishop Baldock left behind, or how they reacted to the experience, erudition, and spiritual outlook of an archdeacon from a hundred years earlier. But Peter of Blois was in good company in at least two respects. For one thing, by the time Baldock died, scribes on both sides of the Channel had been churning out copies of Peter's letter collection for a century, and for another, his letters routinely appeared alongside those of such luminaries as Ambrose of Milan, Gregory the Great, and Bernard of Clairvaux. As marginalized as he may have felt during his life, in death Peter burst into the literary mainstream in the secular and monastic libraries of the Late Middle Ages. William Stubbs's Victorian disappointment at the lack of "news" in twelfth-century letters would not have moved Peter's medieval readers.[1]

The letters must have appealed in part because they so neatly typify an accepted, popular, and useful medieval genre. That genre, however, has proved troublesome to modern scholars, and aside from Giles Constable's *Letters and Letter Collections* in the *Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge* series, there is no comprehensive treatment of letter collections.[2] Among those who have worked on twelfth-century

1. William Stubbs, *Seventeen Lectures on the Study of Medieval and Modern History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), 146.

2. Giles Constable, *Letters and Letter Collections,* Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental 17 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976). For other helpful and general introductions to twelfth-century epistolography, see Constable, introduction to *The Letters of Peter the Venerable* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 2:1–44; C. N. L. Brooke, introduction to *The Letters of John of Salisbury,* ed. W. J. Millor and H. E. Butler; rev. C. N. L. Brooke (London, Edinburgh, et al.: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1955), 1:xxviii–lii; and Julian Haseldine, "Epistolography," in *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide,* ed. F. A. C. Mantello and A. G. Rigg (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 650–58.

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letters, Haskins and Leclercq noted their classical flourishes and stylistic beauty, and found, particularly in letters of love and friendship, ideal vehicles for the spiritual dynamism of the period.[3] However, writers of letters, as Peter's own career makes abundantly clear, feared for more than their spiritual well-being, and their literary models were not all classical. The development of epistolary practice in the twelfth century corresponded with the rise of a "new class of men concerned with the business of society" responsible for conducting business through the written word, and in this respect letter writing went hand in hand with social and administrative change.[4] In this context, letters can provide a microhistory of the development of the literate elite. They constructed and reacted to power relationships between members of the school-trained clergy, disseminated the ideals of the schools and monasteries, and developed networks of patronage and friendship throughout Christendom.[5] Clerics used letters to make the learning of Paris, Chartres, Bologna, and the other schools practical.[6] An ecclesiastical servant trained in rhetoric and exposed to monastic spirituality, Peter contributed to several dynamic cultural trends that conditioned contemporary letter writing, and so serves as an outstanding, if idiosyncratic, practitioner of the genre.

Peter and his fellow letter writers did not craft their distinctive epistolary contributions ex nihilo, but drew upon an epistolographic tradition reaching back to antiquity and the letters of Cicero, Seneca, and Pliny. Cicero left no doubt as to his importance to Rome's security in letters that recount his political maneuvering during various crises. They sometimes allow us to track his movements on a daily basis. Seneca and Pliny, on the other hand, wrote letters primarily, if not strictly, as works of literature that could carry their philosophical or aesthetic ideals to a wider audi-

3. Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, 139–46; Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 176–81, and "Le genre épistolaire au moyen âge," *Revue du moyen âge latin* 2 (1946): 63–70; Constable, introduction to *Letters of Peter the Venerable*, 2:29–44.

4. Constable, "Dictators and Diplomats in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries: Medieval Epistolography and the Birth of Modern Bureaucracy," in *Culture and Spirituality in Medieval Europe* (Aldershot, U.K., and Brookfield, Vt.: Variorum, 1996), 3.41.

5. See John Van Engen, "Letters, Schools and Written Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in *Dialektik und Rhetorik im früheren und hohen Mittelalter: Rezeption, Überlieferung und gesellschaftliche Wirkung antiker Gelehrsamkeit vornehmlich im 9. und 12. Jahrhundert*, ed. Johannes Fried, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs 27 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1997), 97–132; Julian Haseldine, "Friendship and Rivalry: The Role of *Amicitia* in Twelfth-Century Monastic Relations," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44 (1993): 390–414; and Haseldine, ed., *Friendship in Medieval Europe* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999).

6. See Rolf Köhn, "Schulbildung und Trivium im lateinischen Hochmittelalter und ihr möglicher praktischer Nutzen," in *Schulen und Studium im sozialen Wandel des hohen und späten Mittelalters*, ed. Johannes Fried (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1986), 265–81.

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ence, treatises disguised as correspondence. All of these authors, however, made a point of collecting and circulating their own letters, presenting themselves at once as writers, philosophers, and statesmen.[7]

To twelfth-century ecclesiastics, however, the primary exemplars of this genre would not have been classical. For the Middle Ages the supreme expression of the epistolary art was the collection of Pauline epistles in the New Testament, even if their form and style was not imitated. St. Paul had instructed the earliest Christians through short epistles, which became in themselves yet another variety of letters.[8] Following Paul, but naturally integrating classical rhetoric into their method, the Latin Fathers of the Church all left collections of correspondence. Augustine wrote hundreds on myriad subjects; St. Jerome seemed to relish producing acerbic pieces incorporating elements of satire, and so provided an epistolary commentary on contemporary vices; Gregory the Great supported his missionaries through letters of instruction.[9] Carolingian writers, especially Alcuin of York and Lupus of Ferrières, had their letters collected and circulated, but the first large, diverse medieval collection appeared at the start of the second millennium with Gerbert of Reims's correspondence, which included expositions on learned topics along with the business letters from the author's tenure as bishop, archbishop, and pope.[10] These letters, collected for the most part after the author's death, illustrate the life and times of a great intellectual, and subsequent collections served similar purposes.

7. On the literary aspects of Cicero's letter's, see G. O. Hutchinson, *Cicero's Correspondence: A Literary Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). For Seneca, see B. L Hijmans, *Inlaboratus et Facilis: Aspects of Structure in Some Letters of Seneca* (Leiden: Brill, 1976); and L. D. Reynolds, *The Medieval Tradition of Seneca's Letters* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965). For Pliny, see A. N. Sherman-White, *The Letters of Pliny: A Historical and Social Commmentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966).

8. See Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, Library of Early Christianity 5 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986). For a dated but thorough introduction to ancient Latin epistolography, see Hermann Peter, *Der Brief in der romischen Litteratur* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1901). On the attitudes of twelfth-century writers toward the Pauline epistles, see J. J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 215.

9. On Jerome, see David S. Wiesen, *St. Jerome as a Satirist: A Study in Christian Thought and Letters,* Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 34 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964). On Gregory, see Dag Ludvig Norberg, *Critical and Exegetical Notes on the Letters of St. Gregory the Great,* Filogistik arkiv 27 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1982), and "Style personel et style admnistratif dans le *Registrum epistularum* de saint Grégoire le Grand," in *Grégoire le Grand,* eds. J. Fontaine et al. (Paris, 1986).

10. On Alcuin and Carolingian leters, see *Alcuin and Charlemagne: Studies in Carolingian History and Literature,* Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 32 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1959). For Gerbert, see Harriet P. Lattin, introduction to *The Letters of Gerbert with His Papal Privileges as Sylvester II,* Records of Civilization 60 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 3–31.

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The term "letter" covers a wide range of literary artifacts. Not all pieces bearing the formal trappings generally associated with letters were ever sent, and most letters concerning business and administration probably depended heavily on oral messages entrusted to their bearers.[11] The letter as a literary form existed quite apart from the everyday business of correspondence between two parties. But the fundamental conceit of a letter, that it is a direct message to another soul, even if this is nothing more than a conceit, turns it into a social transaction, a means of rebuking, imploring, exhorting, or simply narrating. Even a fictional letter reflects, at least dimly, this aspect of correspondence. The letter collection, qua collection, is its own genre, comprised of a series of pieces that may have been modified from their original form to form a new kind of work, but nevertheless dependent for meaning on the presence of significant addressees. Peter of Blois, who revised, added to, and occasionally pared down his own corpus, clearly recognized the significance of the transformation from correspondence to collection.[12]

The late eleventh and early twelfth centuries witnessed a great blossoming in the circulation of letter collections of prominent personalities including bishops Lanfranc and Anselm of Canterbury, Ivo of Chartres, and Hildebert of Lavardin; an abbess, Hildegard of Bingen; and the abbots Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter the Venerable of Cluny, and Peter of Celle. The compilation was sometimes effected by the author, but often by admirers who collected and circulated the correspondence as models for both literary style and moral behavior.[13] Other collections, such as the *Libelli de lite* of letters relating to the Investiture Controversy of the eleventh century, surfaced to disseminate controversial opinions during political or religious quarrels.[14] Peter of Blois's lifetime saw the collection, by Alan of Tewkesbury, of letters relating to the Becket controversy, as well as the separate collections of prominent churchmen, most important among them bishops Gilbert Foliot of London and Arnulf of Lisieux,

11. See Pierre Chaplais, *English Diplomatic Practice in the Middle Ages* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2003), 6–28, 45–50.

12. On this point, see Monika Klaes, "Von einer Briefsammlung zum literarischen Briefbuch," in Edeltraud Forster et al., eds., *Hildegard von Bingen: Prophetin durch die Zeiten,* (Freiburg, Basel, and Vienna: Herderm 1997), 153–70.

13. See Anne Duggan, *Thomas Becket: A Textual History of His Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 5. For a vigorous debate on the creation of Anselm's letter collection, see R. W. Southern, "Sally Vaughn's Anselm: An Examination of the Foundations," and Sally N. Vaughn, "Anselm: Saint and Statesman," *Albion* 20 (1988): 181–204 and 205–20, esp. 194–201 and 211–16.

14. *Libelli de Lite imperatorum et pontificum saeculis XI et XII conscripti,* MGH *Scriptores* 9, 3 vols. (Frankfurt, 1891–1897).

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and Becket's friend and ally John of Salisbury.[15] These collections were circulated and copied for a variety of reasons, but in general posterity revered letters as models of style, documents for use in propaganda wars, or records of the deeds and ideas of great men, especially bishops.

Still, there was no single accepted form for a letter or a letter collection, and there is today little scholarly consensus as to what constitutes one. Twelfth-century transformations in the institutions of learning and the role of the learned elite helped give rise to this confusion, and Peter's letter collection illustrates this dramatically. Letter collections occupied a cultural space between the schools and the world of administration, just as Peter himself passed through Chartres, Tours, Paris, Bologna, Rouen, and Canterbury. By the 1150s, letter writing was an art in its own right, practiced in the schools of northern Italy and France, and students learned it for reasons both artistic and practical. Having studied in both France and Italy, Peter could synthesize ideas from the contemporary tradition of *artes dictandi*, the handbooks for the construction of letters. One such handbook, a *Libellus de arte dictandi*, bears Peter's name, and, while there is some debate, many scholars accept the attribution.[16] The emphasis on style evident in the *Libellus*, and in Peter's own letters, places him in a tradition of Schoolmen, such as the Orléans master Bernard of Meung, concerned with codifying good prose composition and with providing good working models of epistolary practice.[17] Similarly, Peter's contemporary Master Transmundus, who worked at the papal court and like Peter was a correspondent of the learned Cardinal Albert of Morra, attached a series of letters to an *Introductiones de arte dicandi*. Transmundus, like Peter, worked over his letter collections several times, but was more explicit that many of his pieces were practical models for corre-

15. For John, see above, note 2, and *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, 2:xix–lxiii; for Gilbert, see *The Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot, Abbot of Gloucester (1139–48), Bishop of Hereford (1148–63), and London (1163–87)*, ed. Z. N. Brooke, Adrian Morey, and C. N. L. Brooke (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967); for Arnulf, *The Letters of Arnulf of Lisieux*, ed. Frank Barlow (London: Royal Historical Society, 1939); Thomas Becket's own letters are edited in *The Correspondence of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury 1162–1170*, 2 vols., ed. Anne Duggan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); other letters relating to the Becket Controversy are found in *MTB*, vols. 5–7.

16. On *dictamen* handbooks, see the entries in *Repertorium der Artes Dictandi des Mittelalters I*, ed. F. J. Worstbrock, M. Klaes, and J. Lütten (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1992); see Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 194–268; and Martin Camargo, ed., *Medieval Rhetorics of Prose Composition: Five English* Artes dictandi *and Their Tradition* (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995).

17. On Bernard, see Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 226–28; *Repertorium der Artes Dictandi I*, 43–62.

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spondence.[18] Transmundus wrote as an educator drawing on his experience at the papal curia, and in the process showed the versatility of the genre, mixing ideas of monastic origin with the form and style associated with the schools.[19]

Occasionally, letter collections defy easy classification, as in the case of the collection found in Paris Bibliotheque Nationale MS Latin 13575, containing a series of letters from northern France or Normandy, probably from the abbey of Bec.[20] Its author is never identified in the manuscript, though it has been attributed to Alan of Lille, and it has been claimed recently that four of the letters represent correspondence between Peter of Blois and Alan of Lille. The argument depends on stylistic evidence, but what the collection suggests most emphatically is that school-trained clerks wrote in a shared language that depended on allusions to commonly read texts. While the attribution to Alan and Peter has been roundly rejected, the letters in the manuscript demonstrate how learned scholars, working in the world or in monasteries, communicated using the language of Scripture, patristic sources, and contemporary academic discourse.

In like fashion, Peter brought epistolary practice out of the schools and into the world of ecclesiastical power, and explored his own spirituality. Christopher Brooke, who admired the quality of Peter's Latin, regarded the letters as the "portentous literary exercises of everyman."[21] With his enormous range of concerns and habit of revisiting problems from different angles, Peter is a singularly engaging everyman. Although his letters are certainly not straightforward records of his life, and are often formulaic and sometimes at least partly fictitious, to dismiss them as "exercises" divests them of their undoubted grounding in clerical experience. The very term "exercise" should be discomfiting to a careful student of the collection, for it implies something otiose and simple, and Peter had little leisure and less peace of mind. What, after all, impelled a middling archdeacon to revise and collect his letters for circulation, and then

18. For Transmundus, see Sheila J. Heathcote, "The Letter Collections Attributed to Master Transmundus, Papal Notary and Monk of Clairvaux in the Late Twelfth Century," *Analecta Cisterciensia* 31 (1965): 35–109, here at 48; *Repertorium der Artes Dictandi I*, 99–111.

19. Heathcote, "Letter Collections Attributed to Master Transmundus," 66.

20. Françoise Hudry, ed., *Alain de Lille (?): Lettres familières (1167–1170)* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2003), esp. 20–27, 88–103. For the rejection of Hudry's conjoined theses that (a) the letters were written by Alan of Lille and (b) that letters 2–4 represent a correspondence between Peter and Alan, see the following reviews of Hudry's edition: Nicholas Vincent, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 56 (2005): 572–74; and Lena Wahlgren-Smith, *Speculum* 81 (2006): 536–37.

21. C. N. L. Brooke, introduction to *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, 1:xlv–xlvi.

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to revise them again and distribute different versions of the resulting collection? In addition, although Peter occasionally loses control of his style and expresses a perhaps excessive fondness for tired puns, he seldom gets bogged down in rhetorical games to the point of obfuscating his message. His message, and not just the style through which he conveyed it, mattered to him, and so did clarity. Peter presumably wrote many letters as part of his position as *cancellarius* at Canterbury, but, aside from John of Salisbury, no other episcopal chancellor collected and circulated so many still-extant letters, let alone letters written in his own name. Peter stands out as a member of the middle ranks of the clergy who seems to have thrust himself into the literary world, with no great prelacy to add authority to his words.

As a result, Peter's letters present his unique perspective, and not that of a court, king, emperor, or prelate. One can find a useful contrast in a letter writer of the next generation, Peter of Vinea, who served as Frederick II's chancellor and primary adviser. He too was steeped in the *dictamen* traditions, but through his letters *dictamen* in fact spoke for the Holy Roman Empire, and so Peter of Vinea brought his prodigious school learning to bear on the diplomatic and legal practice of its government. His letter collection includes personal, political, and administrative correspondence (his own and that of his correspondents), and so provides a crucial source for the cultural and political history of his day.[22] Because of his official position and immersion in political intrigue, Peter of Vinea's rhetorical flourishes can be seen to enhance the political import of his writings, rather than to undermine their historical value.

The earlier collection of Peter of Blois, on the other hand, is a grand exercise in self-representation through a series of observations on the clerical life. "Self-representation" need not include autobiography, and Peter's letters are indeed unfortunately short on biographical detail. He seldom recounted the events of his life in his letters. Instead he responded to the dilemmas that arose in his career, navigated the ambiguities of his age, and occasionally dealt with the business of securing prebends and employment. He laid bare his anxieties, pet peeves, and disappointments through his directives for the proper conduct of clerics, his correspon-

22. H. M. Schaller, "L'epistolario di Pier delle Vigne," in *Politica e cultura nell'italia di Federico II*, Collana di Studi e Ricerche 1 (Pisa: Pacini, 1986), 95–111, and "Kanzlei und Hofkapelle Kaiser Friedrichs II," *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento* (= *Jahrbuch des Italienisch-Deutschen Historischen Instituts in Trient*) 2 (1978 for 1976): 75–116; on the life and work of Peter of Vinea, see also David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), esp. 324–27.

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dence with superiors, and his spiritual advice. He circulated his collection and thus needed to write in a language his clerical audience could understand, and on topics that meant something to them. Because he changed the content of his collection significantly at least once during his lifetime, and less drastically on perhaps three or four other occasions, we can also see that Peter not only represented but literally re-presented his experience as a secular cleric. His revisions introduced some serious difficulties into the manuscript tradition and scholars have struggled with their implications since the late nineteenth century.

The appendix to this volume will survey past scholarship and discuss the implications of the manuscript tradition, but for the present two major conclusions should be introduced: first, Peter significantly altered the text of at least three letters during his lifetime, and made smaller changes to a dozen or so others; and second, Peter changed the content of the letter collection as a whole during his career, adding new letters and removing some old ones.

The overall effect of Peter's letters is not of true autobiography, but of far more than rhetorical instruction or stylistic preening. Addressed to his equals and superiors in the Church hierarchy, they offer hints as to Peter's own sense of his place in the world, a representation of himself and his dilemmas conveyed by a masterful Latin style. He reveals a strong sense of self through his harsh rebukes and sometimes embarrassingly defensive posturing, but it is a self circumscribed by ecclesiastical power relations. Peter constructed a map of the world of the clergy and navigated its options by putting his learning and ambition on display—he left what is in essence a microhistory of anxiety.

The Collected Letter: Between Function and Form

When Peter of Blois chose to compile his collected letters and present them as a summation of his professional and literary career, he followed an established tradition. As a genre, letters suited him perfectly. Not only did he have a professional responsibility to write them, but the tradition of letter writing encompassed many of the cultural elements that were bound up in Peter's identity as a learned cleric: it had classical and patristic precedent, it allowed for stylistic embellishment and rhetorical tours-de-force, and it ideally served the purposes of the school-trained elite of twelfth-century Europe.

A medieval letter was a social transaction that communicated the will of an individual, group, or institution to another. It could issue a decree,

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explain a decision, disseminate an opinion, or express friendship, sometimes with a political goal in mind, and it often gauged the social distance between writer and addressee.[23] The very rules for writing letters in the twelfth century were rife with social implications, since they offered prescriptions for acceptable ways to flatter superiors, and for the proper salutations with which to address the great and powerful.[24] Peter of Blois had clearly internalized many conventions, and, again, he probably wrote his own handbook on *dictamen*.[25] In practice, however, he could bend the rules, and later in his life he argued against adhering to the convention of referring to magnates in the plural, insisting that this was merely the "deceitfulness of flatterers."[26] In addition, he borrowed freely from Scripture, patristic sources, and more recent Latin writers. Through his letters, he presented himself in layers of allusions that any contemporary would recognize, but in a way that still conveyed a sense of his own hopes, ideals, and dilemmas.

The manuscripts indicate that Peter of Blois wrote around 250 letters whose authenticity cannot be questioned.[27] Of these, it is likely that 163 were at one point or another brought into a main collection.[28] The present study uses the term "the letter collection of Peter of Blois" or "the collection," to refer to these collected letters. In addition, Peter wrote about twelve letters that he never added to the collection and another seventy or so that did not circulate with it during his lifetime.[29] This last group forms the core of what are now referred to as the "later letters," edited by Elizabeth Revell in 1993.[30] What follows will focus primarily on the main collection that Peter compiled and revised during his lifetime.

23. See, for example, Julian Haseldine, "Friendship and Rivalry: The Role of *Amicitia* in Twelfth-Century Monastic Relations," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44 (1993): 390–414; and John McLaughlin, "*Amicitia* in Practice: John of Salisbury and His Circle," in *England in the Twelfth Century: Proceedings of the 1988 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Daniel Williams (Woodbridge, U.K., and Wolfeboro, N.H.: Boydell, 1990), 165–81.

24. William D. Pratt, "The Early *Ars Dictaminis* as Response to a Changing Society," *Viator* 9 (1978): 133–56.

25. Discussed below.

26. "adulantium fraudulentia": *Later Letters*, no. 51, p. 234.

27. See also the appendix, below. For Higonnet's list of letters, including comments on the authenticity of particular pieces, see "Letters of Peter of Blois," 561–71. Also on the problem of authenticity, see Cohn, "The Manuscript Evidence for the Letters of Peter of Blois," and Southern, "Some New Letters of Peter of Blois."

28. The figure of 163 collected letters was also arrived at by Higonnet, *Letter Collections*, 69–72.

29. Higonnet, "Letters of Peter of Blois," 70. She notes that several of these uncollected letters are shorter than normal, two are business letters, and one duplicates another in the collection.

30. See the tables in Revell, *Later Letters*, xxii–xxiii; Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 130–32; Wollin, *Carmina*, 76–77; and Higonnet's classified list, above, note 18.

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What was the nature of the pieces that were compiled? The question of the "reality" of the letters, that is, whether the pieces in Peter's collection were actually sent to their addressees and only later compiled and generally circulated, can never be answered satisfactorily, and has caused considerable difficulty for students of many medieval letter collections. In the form that he left them for posterity, Peter's letters are not true examples of sent letters, since he clearly revised several of them before compilation. Occasionally the purported recipient changes in subsequent revisions, and in one spectacular case a revision shifts a letter's historical moment by some eighteen years.[31] It is possible that some of the letters were purely models or self-serving fictions, such as those allegedly written for Eleanor of Aquitaine on the subject of Richard I's captivity.[32] In the case of many other letters, it is plausible that they were sent, and there is no compelling evidence to deny that they are at least distant reflections of actual correspondence. Many have rather vague address clauses, often without so much as an initial. Still others read like generic calls to the monastic vocation in which the precise identity of the addressee may be irrelevant.[33] In Letter 92, defending himself from the charge that his writings were derivative, Peter claims he was singled out because "I put forth a model for writing [*forma dictandi*] to the less educated."[34] Peter's collection, however, cannot have been strictly a collection to aid others in the *ars dictaminis*.[35] The letters were not usually attached to a *dictamen* handbook and do not seem as though they would have been especially useful as models for formal business documents.[36] Even if Peter intended some of the letters to be stylistic models, that intention does not militate against the "reality" of the letters. The first collection of Arnulf of Lisieux's letters appears to be a sort of "handbook for letter writers," but its letters describe details of Arnulf's career and duties and in all probability reflect a genuine correspondence.[37] Particularly in the case of letters writ-

31. *Ep.* 30, discussed below in the present chapter. The letter exists in a modern edition in Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 180–85. For a recent analysis, see Wahlgren, "Peter of Blois and the Later Career of Reginald FitzJocelin," *English Historical Review* 111 (1996): 1202–15.

32. Lees, "The Letters of Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine to Pope Celestine III," 78–93; cf. Flori, *Aliénor d'Aquitaine*, 230–35.

33. See Jean Leclercq, "Lettres de vocation à la vie monastique," in *Analecta Monastica* 3, ed. M. M. Lebreton et al., Studia Anselmiana 37 (Rome, 1955), 169–97.

34. "quod formam dictandi praescribo simplicibus": *Ep.* 92, *PL* 207, 289.

35. Cf. Türk, *Pierre de Blois: Ambitions et remords*, 26, and Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 115.

36. An exception is that in Paris Bibliothèque Nationale MS lat. 11867, nine of Peter's letters appear along with the *ars dictaminis* of Thomas of Capua.

37. See Carolyn Polling Schriber, trans., *The Letter Collections of Arnulf of Lisieux* (Lewiston, N.Y., and Queenston, Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 19.

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ten in the name of others, Peter may have circulated letters that had been sent as examples of the proper form for important communications.

In the first half of the twentieth century, a number of German scholars explored the technical aspects of the composition and circulation of medieval letter collections, and their relationship to real correspondence, but the evidence is not at all consistent and lends itself to divergent interpretations. Bernhard Schmeidler, who worked on the correspondence surrounding the Investiture Controversy, as well as that between Abelard and Heloise, posited a foundational theory that these letter collections depended on a "letter book" kept by the author.[38] We have no way of knowing whether Peter kept his letters in a book or as loose sheets, only that he did collect them himself. The letters of some authors, such as Peter Damian, were clearly preserved and circulated through several different channels: by the author, by the recipients, and by admirers.[39] Schmeidler gave the scribes who prepared the collections for circulation, men like Peter the Venerable's secretary Peter of Poitiers, major responsibility for giving the collections their sense of unity. Peter of Blois, however, compiled his own collection, and so is solely responsible for any thematic cohesion. Since, unlike almost every other prominent letter writer of the twelfth century, he had no prelacy, he did not have a scriptorium eager to record his letters for posterity, and it seems unlikely that the Canterbury chancery at which he worked would have preserved the letters of the archdeacon of Bath without his intervention. Peter united the figures of the author and compiler in his own person, and so could shape the collection to his liking. In contrast, the letters of Ivo of Chartres, similarly covering a broad range of interests, circulated in a variety of forms depending on the interests of the scribes doing the compiling.[40]

Peter's involvement in the process, however, does not completely eliminate the problem of scribal changes, and it presents an entirely different set of difficulties concerning the relationship between the collection and

38. Bernhard Schmeidler, "Über Briefsammlungen des früheren Mittelalters in Deutschland und ihre kritische Verwertung," *Vetenskaps-Societeten i Lund: Årsbok* (1926): 5–27, and "Der Briefwechsel zwischen Abaelard und Heloise dennoch eine literarische Fiction Abealrds," *Revue bénédictine* 52 (1940): 85–95. The German scholarship on medieval epistolographic practice is neatly summarized in Higonnet, "Letters of Peter of Blois," 286–96. See also Carl Erdmann, *Studien zur Briefliteratur Deutschlands im elften Jahrhundert*, Schriften des Reichsinstituts für ältere deutsche Gesichtskunde 1 (Leipzig, 1938). For more general remarks on epistolary practice, see Constable, *Letters and Letter Collections*, 42–48; and Julian Haseldine, "Epistolography."

39. Kurt Reindel, "Studien zur Überlieferung der Werke des Petrus Damiani," part 1, *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 15 (1959): 99–100; Higonnet "Letters of Peter of Blois," 324.

40. Leclercq, "La collection des lettres d'Yves de Chartres," 112.

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"true" correspondence. Scholars have arrived at wildly contradictory conclusions about the creation of the collection. Higonnet, for example, argued that Letter 14 (the famous critique of Henry II's court) was actually sent because Peter felt compelled to write Letter 150 to apologize for it.[41] Several other scholars have interpreted the pair of letters as a rhetorical exercise that demonstrates that Peter used the epistolary form to present a sort of early Scholastic *sic et non*. These scholars, then, use the presence of Letter 150 alongside Letter 14, which Higonnet felt proved both were sent, to argue that in fact *neither* letter was sent.[42] Because Peter's collection contains numerous ambiguities, and different approaches to many issues, the latter argument is not altogether convincing. Letters 14 and 150 contribute to a running discussion of clerical service in secular courts that pervades the collection, and the presence of this running discussion in no way suggests the letters were never sent in some form.

Peter's relative silence on how he collected his letters compounds this problem. He made few references to the actual sending of the letters, while his contemporaries Arnulf of Lisieux and John of Salisbury continually referred to their messengers, the inclusion of information in oral messages, and the need for secrecy. Only one of Peter's letters includes a reference to information entrusted orally to the bearer, and that letter does not seem to have been a part of the main collection.[43] This still tells us nothing about which letters he actually sent. Peter did, however discuss the problem of collecting and copying letters from his own drafts in a later letter.[44] The collection probably contains a mixture of sent letters, rhetorical exercises, and spiritual exhortations, but the former may in fact predominate, since there is no firm evidence to doubt that most of the letters were actual correspondence, and the recipients and subject matter of nearly all are perfectly plausible for such an ecclesiastic in the twelfth century. In turning a group of letters into a veritable compendium of moral prescription Peter recalled the work of St. Jerome, who had shown how effectively compiled

41. Higonnet, "Letters of Peter of Blois," 153.

42. Marc Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges: Étude sur le caractere supernataurel attribué a la puissance royale particulierement en France et en Angleterre* (Strasbourg, 1924), 41–42, translated as *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, trans. J. E. Anderson (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 22; Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 48; Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 167.

43. *Ep.* 149, *PL* 207, 459. Higonnet, in "The Letters of Peter of Blois," 146, counted fifteen references to the sending of letters in Peter's corpus. However, many of these refer to letters other than the one being sent or replied to, and often refer simply to the distance between friends. The letters she mentions are *Epp.* 5, 18, 19, 37, 41, 71, 75, 90, 111, 128, 149, 153, 245, and 253.

44. *Later Letters*, no. 9, pp. 49–51. This letter is discussed in the appendix, below.

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letters could be turned into a coherent moral polemic.[45] The presence of received rhetoric and models in letters does not mean they were not sent any more than Cicero's dependence on Demosthenes for his *Philippics* proves that his speeches were not delivered.

Literary convention, professional practice, and the rules governing epistolary composition in chanceries all influenced the writing of Peter's letters, even though a very small percentage of his collected letters were written in his position as *cancellarius*. His professional career advanced just as the *ars dictandi* took shape and was codified in France and England after its birth in Italy. Men of the schools, including Bernard of Meung, and professional ecclesiastics like Peter's friend Albert of Morra, who after service as papal chancellor became Pope Gregory VIII in 1187, all played a part in this process.[46] In Giles Constable's view, this was a golden age of epistolography, before overzealous attention to rules of form suffocated the medium.[47] In this regard it is certainly significant that the *dictamen* handbooks that emerged from Peter's homeland of the Loire region tended to be more humanistic and less technical than their Italian counterparts.[48] Peter's own *Libellus de arte dictandi rhetorice* (though the attribution has been disputed and will probably never be proven beyond doubt) belongs to this tradition.[49] Although Southern referred to it as "the treatise to which [the letters] formed a body of illustrations," Peter's *Libellus* never appeared in tandem with the letter collection.[50] It survives in only one manuscript, Cambridge University Library Dd-9-38, inserted among royal letters mostly dating to the reigns of the three Edwards, and none of which have anything to do with twelfth-century epistolary conventions.[51] At any rate, Peter's letters themselves do not adhere especially

45. Wissen, *Jerome as a Satirist*, passim.

46. On the development of *dictamen*, see Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 194–268, and "Rhetoric" in *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, 629–38; and *Repertorium I*, passim.

47. Constable, *Letters and Letter Collections*, 36–37.

48. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, 226.

49. The problem of the authenticity of the *Libellus de arte dictandi rhetorice* is discussed by Thore Janson, *Prose Rhythm in Medieval Latin from the 9th to the 13th Century*, Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 20 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1977), 97–98; and Martin Camargo, "The *Libellus de arte dictandi* Attributed to Peter of Blois," *Speculum* 59 (1984): 16–41. The handbook has been printed with an introduction in *Medieval Rhetorics of Prose Composition: Five English* Artes dictandi *and Their Tradition*, ed. Camargo (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1995), 37–87.

50. Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 115.

51. Cambridge University Library MS Dd-9-38, ff. 115r–121r. See also H. R. Luard et al., *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1856), 1:390–401.

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closely to the conventions prescribed in the handbook. Perhaps, as has been suggested, he practiced the "liberty of the master," and few of Peter's letters are formal business documents. Like those of his predecessor Hildebert of Lavardin, they frequently neglect the conventional division into *salutatio, exordium, narratio, petitio,* and *conclusio.*[52] When his letters can be so divided, they are generally clear examples of professional requests, such as a letter to Archbishop Conrad of Mainz requesting that he help liberate Richard Lionheart from captivity, or his shameless demand for a prebend from Reginald of Salisbury.[53] Some of his spiritual exhortations resemble a formal request, as when he urges a novice nun to persevere in her new calling: following a brief salutation he praises the recipient *(exordium,* in the manner often referred to as *captatio benevolentiae),* then a description of the superiority of the cloistered life to the Babylon that is the world *(narratio);* this description leads into an exhortation for the young novice to guard her virginity *(petitio),* followed by a brief warning that lost virginity is lost forever *(conclusio).*[54] Many letters in the collection, however, display no discernible regard for the rules of *dictamen.*

Another distinctive feature of *dictamen,* the *cursus,* or use of rhythmic sentence endings then current in the papal chancery, appears frequently in Peter's corpus, but not as frequently as in the work of John of Salisbury (who had served at the Roman curia), or masters of the art like Bernard of Meung. Thore Janson has shown that Peter stands more or less in the middle ranks of twelfth-century letter writers with regard to use of the *cursus,* employing standard rhythms more frequently than many writers, but less frequently than others.[55] The use of *dictamen* in Peter's letters may reflect his rhetorical education at Tours rather than professional necessity, and in this respect he resembles certain of his contemporaries, especially Gilbert Foliot and Arnulf of Lisieux. He, like these other writers, employed the tools of the current movement toward the professionalization of letter writing while looking back to patristic and classical precedent.[56] The collections of the period thus tend to combine certain elements of current rhetorical education with reactions to political and spiritual concerns. The literary richness of Peter's corpus results in no small measure from this convergence.

52. The phrase "liberty of the master" is from Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 116. On Hildebert, see Peter von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin,* 80.

53. *Ep.* 143, *PL* 207, 428–32; *Ep.* 225, 514–15.

54. *Ep.* 35, *PL* 207, 113–14.

55. Janson, *Prose Rhythms,* 109–15.

56. Morey and Brooke, *Gilbert Foliot and His Letters,* 9ff.

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Peter points to all these elements of the letter collection in his letter of dedication to Henry II, discussed above in the introduction. There he argued that the letter writer must endlessly modify his art according to circumstance and recipients. Peter thus, in a beautiful complaint about the vicissitudes of being a writer, passed off responsibility for the faults of his writing to professional tumult, as well as to those persons who wrote the letters down, presumably scribes. The dedication thus illustrates Peter's position as a writer and his dilemma. His letters "depended on another's judgment," as did his standing in the world.[57]

Yet the dedication also raises the question of precisely whose judgment Peter sought. Did he really expect Henry II to learn from his work? That such a monarch would take the time to read it? After all, although Peter did secure a number of incomes, there is no way to determine what role Henry himself played in providing them. The one pension recorded (three times) in the Pipe Rolls may have more to do with the influence of Gilbert Foliot than that of the king.[58] As a result it seems more than likely that the dedication was a literary convenience rather than an expression of a true patronage relationship. In the absence of a clear quid pro quo, any such relationship must remain conjectural.[59] Moreover, while the letter certainly conforms to any reformer's vision for the relationship between king and counselor, some of Peter's language is downright condescending, and a clerical audience may well have known that this was not a letter a savvy cleric would have sent to a king. Like so much of the collection (as subsequent chapters will make clear), the dedication draws variously from prevailing spiritual currents, the learning of the schools, and the realities of an ecclesiastic career.

Fashioning an Epistolary Community

Those whose judgment impinged on the composition and collection of Peter's letters included not only (if at all) his king, but also his superiors, his friends, and his rivals. In the letter collection, these friends and rivals coalesce into an epistolary community that serves as a (mostly) silent au-

57. See above, introduction, notes 1–3.

58. See above, chapter 1, notes 85–86.

59. On the relatively small numbers of authors for whom Henry II acted as a true "patron," see Broadhurst, "Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine: Patrons of Literature in French?" which revises C. H. Haskins, "Henry II as a Patron of Literature," in *Essays in Medieval History Presented to Thomas Frederick Tout,* ed. A. G. Little and F. M. Powicke (Manchester, U.K., 1925), 71–77. See also Walter F. Schirmer and Ulrich Broich, *Studien zum literarischen Patronat im England des 12. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne and Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1962), esp. 33–35, 161–94.

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dience for Peter's complaints, rebukes, and exhortations. The types of letters Peter wrote, and the types of people to whom he wrote them, provide a clear outline of the clerical world through which Peter moved and also help distinguish him from other contemporary letter writers. Of the 163 letters that Peter collected, twenty-six (about sixteen percent) were written on behalf of other people (for all of Peter's correspondence, the proportion is twenty-seven out of about 245). In comparison, 112 of John of Salisbury's 325 letters bear another's name (thirty-four percent).[60] When Peter wrote on behalf of others (most often for the archbishops of Rouen and Canterbury), he addressed the most exalted recipients on matters of great political importance, such as the rebellion of Henry II's sons, while John, writing for Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury, tended to relate intricate legal matters pertaining to ecclesiastical disputes. Perhaps Peter wrote similar letters for his archbishops, but chose not to collect them. It is also possible that this difference between Peter's and John's collection stems from dissimilar professional responsibilities.

The social world of Peter's correspondence encompassed a huge array of ecclesiastical figures, especially those from the middle and upper ranks. Table 1 divides Peter's addressees into a few instructive categories: highest ecclesiastical rank (popes, archbishops, bishops, and cardinals); lesser officeholders (archdeacons, deans, subdeacons, etc.); abbots; monks, nuns, and regular canons; unspecified secular clergy (including masters and secular canons); laypeople; and kings. His main concern is the clerical elite of England, Normandy, and France (though Italy, Sicily, and Germany are also represented), those who shared his education and oftentimes his vocation as well. Laymen appear only rarely. The social makeup of his addressees remained fairly constant throughout the various reissues of the collection, with the significant exception that twelve of the sixteen letters addressed to abbots and eight of the eighteen addressed to monks, nuns, and regular canons appeared in the versions of the collection issued in the 1190s and later. Peter showed ever greater interest in the concerns of the cloister later in his life, as the discussion of his spiritual ideas in chapter 6, below, will demonstrate. As Peter disengaged somewhat from the world of ecclesiastical politics in the late 1190s, his audience likewise shifted slightly. Or, it could be argued, he chose to represent, through his collection, an audience drawn in greater part from the regular clergy as his interests began to coincide more closely with theirs.

60. In John's case the number is affected by the fact that the earlier of his two collections consists primarily of letters written for Archbishop Theobald ($^{80}/_{135}$ = fifty-nine percent). His later collection is almost entirely in his own name ($^{278}/_{290}$ = ninety-six percent).

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TABLE 1. Addressees of Letters in Peter of Blois's Collection

Status of addressees	*Number of collected letters*		*Number of known recipients (total = 112)*
	In Peter's name (total = 137)	*In another's name (total = 26)*	
Kings, queens	4	5	3
Popes	3	6	3
Abbots	15	2	14
Bishops, archbishops, cardinals	44	8	35
Minor ecclesiastical office holders[a]	14	1	15
Unspecified clergy[b]	28	1	29
Monks, nuns, regular canons	18	3	12
Lay people[c]	1	0	1
No address clause	10	0	–

a. Archdeacons, deans, subdeans, etc. b. Clearly not prelates.
c. Excluding kings and queens.

On the whole, however, the list of recipients of Peter's letters suggests an overriding concern with the problems of the secular clergy, both exalted and middling. More than a third (thirty-eight percent) of his letters are addressed to masters and other clergymen no higher in rank than archdeacon, which is slightly higher than the proportion in John of Salisbury's letter collection, and significantly higher than that in most other contemporary collections, such as those of Gilbert Foliot and Arnulf of Lisieux. Peter compiled not only letters to the great and powerful, but also to his fellow clerics and scholars.

It is difficult to speak of a true "circle" of correspondents of Peter of Blois because relatively few of the addressees have more than one letter addressed to them, and there are only three cases of long-term, continuing correspondence to a particular person or group of people: to Reginald of Salisbury, Walter of Coutances, and John of Salisbury. The collection includes two or more letters to thirteen people, and five or more to only these three. There are 1.2 letters per recipient, while the collections of John, Arnulf, and Gilbert all have a proportion of about 2.3. These other writers, and especially John, show a narrower range of interests and direct their let-

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ters to a tighter circle of clergy, often addressing many letters to the same recipient. John sent more than ten letters in his own name to five different men (including seventeen to his friend John of Canterbury), and these correspondents comprise a group with similar status and education.[61] John's later collection testifies to the importance of Thomas Becket in the discourse of the English clergy before and after his martyrdom. John may, as John McLaughlin has argued, have been consciously creating political networks through *amicitia* letters (letters invoking the language of friendship), advancing Becket's cause in life and memorializing him in death.[62] Peter certainly engaged in similar networking, perhaps to solidify his channels of patronage, but he did not need to do so on behalf of so major a figure as Becket, and he rarely advocated a political cause through a series of letters. He addressed more of his collected letters (six) to Reginald of Salisbury, his sometime patron, than to any other single recipient. Next in frequency of address comes Walter of Coutances, bishop of Lincoln and then archbishop of Rouen (five letters), who was an old associate of Peter's at the Canterbury curia and clearly another patron of sorts in the 1190s. Peter also addressed five of the collected letters to John of Salisbury, again on a variety of topics ranging from Becket's exile to his own desire for an income from John's chapter at Chartres. Although the letters to all three of these correspondents present them as intimates of Peter, they hardly qualify as correspondence within an intimate circle. Instead, through his letters Peter created a loose but coherent epistolary community.

The language of friendship helped to bind this community together. And yet, though Peter could write beautifully on the subject of friendship, and adorns several letters with elegant digressions on its value, it is difficult not to suspect that he had few true friends. He employed all the conventions of the disinterested friendship praised by ancients like Cicero and *moderni* like Bernard of Clairvaux, but in a decidedly contemporary context; his friendship statements transcended cloisters, courts, and schools. Of the forty-eight letters (twenty-nine percent) in Peter's collections that display some use of the language of friendship, only twelve are addressed to monks, abbots, or regular canons (out of thirty-six total letters to men of the same status). In almost all of the letters to his most frequent recipients (Reginald of Salisbury, John of Salisbury, and Walter of Coutances), however, he does employ the language of *amici-*

61. John McLaughlin, "*Amicitia* in Practice: John of Salisbury and His Circle," in *England in the Twelfth Century: Proceedings of the 1988 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Daniel Williams (Woodbridge, U.K., and Wolfeboro, Vt.: Boydell, 1990), 175–81.

62. Ibid., 174.

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tia. Peter refers to friendship less frequently than John of Salisbury, who did so to seventy-three percent of his recipients.[63] Whether this implies a less pressing need for friendship letters because of his position (which seems unlikely), or simply a different relationship to the traditions of letter writing and *amicitia*, is unclear. Allusions to love and the ability of the letter to join absent friends undoubtedly reflect an understanding of the current conventions of friendship, and serve as a spiritual adornment to the content of Peter's letters.[64]

As Higonnet pointed out, nearly all of Peter's letters are essentially "spiritual" insofar as they discuss the health of the soul and proper Christian behavior in the world.[65] Occasionally his spirituality appears in traditional epistolary forms such as monastic vocation letters, consolations, or congratulations, but Peter often wrote exhortations that have more in common with sermons than *dictamen*.[66] The letters included in Peter's collection fulfill a wider array of purposes than those of his clerical contemporaries like John and Arnulf, and do not always fall neatly into the categories of pastoral, intimate, and business that appear in many historiographical discussions of epistolography.[67] Table 2 classifies Peter's letters according to the functions they served. The categories listed are somewhat artificial, and often overlap, but they are instructive in illuminating the concerns he felt moved to discuss and in distinguishing his collection from those of his contemporaries. The categories are based on what can reasonably be understood to be the stated purpose of each letter.[68] Though several letters to prelates and patrons may have served to strengthen a tenuous intimacy in anticipation of hoped-for largesse, only explicit requests for positions or assistance appear as "bids for favors." Similarly, "business letters" are only those pieces that show Peter performing official duties, including two highly rhetorical reports to Henry II and Archbishop Richard, and a letter to Peter's bishop over the canonically irregular dismissal of his vice-archdeacon.[69] In order to take a subsequent recompilation of the collection into account, a column for letters included only in later (i.e., after the early 1190s) compilations has been added.

63. Ibid., 172.

64. See also Haseldine, "Friendship and Rivalry"; Yoko Hirata, "John of Salisbury, Gerard Pucelle and *Amicitia*," in *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, 153–65.

65. Higonnet, "Spiritual Ideas," 219.

66. The relationship between sermons and letters has been discussed in the case of Hildebert of Lavardin in von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin*, 50, 80ff.

67. See C. N. L. Brooke, introduction to *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, 1:xlvi.

68. Cf. von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin*, 49–51.

69. *Ep.* 58.

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TABLE 2. Types of Letters in Peter of Blois's Collection

Type of Letter	*Number of letters*			*Percentage of total collected letters*
	In earlier collections[a]	*Added to later collections*[b]	*In earlier but not in later collections*	
Dedication	1	0	0	1
Consolation	3	3	0	2
Congratulations, thanks, praise	6	3	1	6
Discussions of practical theology, law, procedure	7	6	0	8
Spiritual encouragement, advice, exhortation	9	9	1	11
Advice on ecclesiastical duty[c]	6	7	0	8
Requests for favors or assistance	4	3	2	4
Recommendations, intercessions	9	2	0	7
Rebukes	14	9	0	15
Complaints	6	6	2	7
Apologies	7	2	2	6
Business, administration	3	0	0	2
Autobiographical, other personal information	8	2	0	6
Requests for prayers	0	2	0	1
Secretarial letters[d]	19	7	5	16

a. 1184–1189.
b. After c. 1192–1196.
c. Generally addressed to prelates.
d. In another's name.

This analysis shows that in Peter of Blois's hands the medieval letter was a versatile tool, and that he compiled a far more diverse collection than his contemporaries in England and Normandy. Peter had stressed the multifaceted nature of his collection in his dedicatory epistle to Henry II. In choosing the letters for his collection, he clearly followed the classical principle of *varietas*, which mandated that collections offer a diverse assortment of types of correspondence.[70] Letters on the same sub-

70. Constable, introduction to *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, 2:10.

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ject tend to appear scattered throughout the collection (the manuscripts are fairly consistent when it comes to letter order),[71] though there is a cluster consisting predominantly of letters relating to the Becket affair and another to the archiepiscopacy of Walter of Coutances at Rouen.[72] Neither an episcopal register nor a piece of political propaganda, the collection has no obvious focus save for the personal, professional, and spiritual concerns of the author. Peter omitted some letters so as to strip the collection of some of the strictly political and business letters; Higonnet has argued that this shows Peter seeking to endow the collection with a sharper "moral focus."[73] The letters left out of the later editions include pieces written on political events such as the revolt of the king's sons. While Köhn is right to argue Peter sought to place himself, rather than events, into the foreground of later versions, Henry's death and the accession of Richard may have also encouraged him to remove references to the revolt.[74] More often than not, Peter approached contemporary events much as writers like St. Jerome did, as occasions for moral exposition. But Peter also included the apologies, complaints, and bids for favor that must have characterized his life as a cleric with limited political capital.

Comparison with his contemporaries John, Arnulf, and Gilbert further emphasizes the diversity of Peter's collection. Because John of Salisbury endowed his two collections with relatively narrow focuses—Theobald's administration and Becket's struggle, respectively—the contents range less widely than Peter's. Around fifty-five percent of the letters written in John's name contain news, personal information, or intimate discussions of friendship, almost always relating to the Becket affair. John engaged in moral exhortation and spiritual advice primarily as they related to the recipients' political actions. Although his letter collection has two clear thematic centers, its precise epistolary functions are often more vague than those of Peter's letters. Letter 30 in John's collection, for example, includes thanks to and praise of the pope for kindness shown to William Cumin, a rebuke for not dismissing his case earlier, and a request for assistance during John's exile[75]; on another occasion John added news of developments in France to the end of a piece devoted to spiritual matters.[76] In general, John paid less attention to *varietas*, since variety of subject matter was not his objective. Perhaps because of their narrower focus,

71. See Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 25–30.
72. *Epp.* 20–32. For the Walter of Coutances letters, see *Epp.* 124, 125, 138, 141.
73. Higonnet, "Spiritual Ideas," 220.
74. Köhn, "Autobiographie und Selbstilisierung," 702.
75. John of Salisbury, *Ep.* 30, ed. Millor and Brooke, 2:48.
76. John of Salisbury, *Ep.* 226, ed. Millor and Brooke, 2:394–97.

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John's letters had nowhere near the circulation of Peter's in the Middle Ages.[77]

Arnulf of Lisieux's collection has somewhat more in common with Peter's. It contains a variety of letter types, like consolations, congratulations, and so on, and suggests that the author consciously followed the principle of *varietas*. Moreover, Arnulf carefully chose his letters for circulation, issued two different collections, and left others uncollected. He mixed administrative, spiritual, and political concerns to form a diverse collection testifying to the myriad responsibilities of the Norman episcopate. The administrative concerns of a twelfth-century bishop, however, dominate the two collections issued by Arnulf himself.[78] Around forty-five percent of these letters discuss legal, procedural, and political affairs pertinent to his position as bishop of Lisieux. Added to these are letters reporting news, rebukes of subject ecclesiastics, and other minor discussions. While this collection may represent a series of models of "letters a bishop would be expected to write," Peter of Blois's letters had no such expectation to fulfill.[79] His public persona did not carry the weight of Arnulf or John, or most of the authors of letters pertaining to the Becket crisis: Peter endowed his letters with the force of moral prescription as he helped his colleagues to confront the thorny issues inherent to ecclesiastical life. In this regard, Peter's letters demand a different sort of reading than those of a bishop or an abbot. No other extant contemporary collection by a secular cleric shows quite the concern with the private spiritual affairs of the individual. Nor did any other such collection enjoy the wide circulation of Peter's.

The preoccupation with moral prescription surfaces most emphatically in Peter's letters of rebuke. His secular clerical contemporaries' letter collections contain few invectives against immoral behavior when that behavior is not manifested politically. Arnulf wrote positively stinging critiques of his opponents, but not simply with a view to saving the recipient's soul. Peter's rebukes attack involvement in secular affairs, hunting, drinking, and failure to meet the responsibilities of one's *ordo*. Table 2 shows that Peter wrote more letters of rebuke than any other single category. He appears to have spared no ecclesiastical rank from reprimand; his

77. On the manuscript tradition of John's letters, see Brooke, introduction to *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, 1:lvii–lxii.

78. Schriber, *Letter Collections of Arnuld of Lisieux*, 5–14, has identified four groups of Arnulf's letters: two collections issued by the bishop himself, one comprised of uncollected letters, and one collection compiled by Richard of Ilchester.

79. Schriber, introduction to *The Letter Collections of Arnulf of Lisieux*, 19.

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rebukes range from light, respectful warnings for Archbishop Richard of Canterbury to improve his reputation as a defender of the Church to relentless ad hominem attacks on a canon's spiritual shortcomings.[80] Many of Peter's targets are nameless canons or clerics, but he does not hesitate to chide bishops for their secular tendencies, and Ferruolo even suggested that Peter's penchant for criticism could account for his failure to rise past the rank of archdeacon.[81] That Peter included such pieces in his collection emphatically raises the basic question of the purpose of the circulation of an obscure archdeacon's letters, and what could have motivated it. He had plenty to complain about, and in Jerome he had not only a model but a cantankerous, easily offended, literary soul mate. This combination of frustration and piety provided a powerful impetus to moral criticism, and perhaps even an inspiration to circulate his letters. If his office did not give him authority to rebuke, his scriptural and patristic allusions did. The reform movement, with its emphasis on the behavior of the clergy, lent support to his literary endeavor.

Several of the great reformers of the twelfth-century, Bernard of Clairvaux among them, wrote similar epistolary rebukes. Given the importance of obedience in monastic culture, Bernard could be expected to spend a great deal of energy bringing wayward sheep back into the fold. The very first letter in the most recent edition of Bernard's letters reprimands his nephew for deserting the Cistercians for Cluny, just as Peter's fifth letter exhorts a monk (of an undetermined order) not to leave for a less severe disciplinary regime.[82] Bernard directed his virtiol not only at monks of lax discipline but also at prelates who left their flocks to go on crusade, bishops who gave promotions to the unworthy, and other ecclesiastics whose behavior seemed incompatible with his reforming sensibilities. Peter's letters condemn the same errors that aroused Bernard's anger, as in Letter 148, when he urges an abbot not to forsake his abbey for a crusade, or his repeated invectives urging monks and regular canons to adhere to the demands of their orders.[83] Both authors continually railed against monks reneging on their vows, which is entirely understandable coming from a great abbot like Bernard, but more difficult to explain in the case of Peter. He clearly appropriated the letter of monastic rebuke

80. *Epp.* 5, 72.

81. Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, 167.

82. *Ep.* 5, *PL* 207, 13–16. Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ep.* 1, ed. Jean Leclecq and H.-M. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cisterciensienses, 1974), vol. 7. Trans. in *The Letters of Saint Bernard*, ed. and trans. Bruno Scott James (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 1–10.

83. *Ep.* 148, *PL* 207, 436–39.

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as an effective literary vehicle, as a means for expounding on right and wrong. The parallel with Bernard, then, is literary as much as spiritual in that Peter follows the epistolary conventions of reprimand as well as the principles of personal reform. The similarity of form and content to Bernard's letters also lend an air of authority to Peter's prescriptions. Bernard, of course, represented the larger reform movement from which Peter's letters derived much of their spiritual force. While Peter could couch his spirituality in terms of encouragement and exhortation, as he did in eleven percent of his letters, his greatest concern seems to have been with pointing out the faults of others. The epistolary rebuke suited him well.

Moreover, he had a clear notion of pastoral and episcopal duty, and tried to present himself as an ideal shepherd. In his letter collection he fulfilled this duty admirably as a sage spiritual leader attempting to guide his flock. The third part of Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care* prescribed something very much akin to Peter's sort of letter collection. Gregory there instructed the preacher how to admonish his subjects for various sins, and made such admonition an integral part of pastoral duty.[84] While some of Peter's rebukes present the author as arrogant and irascible, others show him following the calling of his *ordo*. His letters are thus an internal critique of the clergy, a record of the administrative life of the clerical elite, and a realization of Peter's self-perception as a pastor. If the content and style of many individual letters are derivative, the collection as a whole represents a unique deployment of the genre, eschewing some of the concerns of episcopal letter writers and borrowing monastic themes and styles to create a mosaic of ecclesiastical life. Both the form and the content of the collection show a confluence of clerical and monastic currents, brought together to represent the experience of Peter of Blois as a cleric steeped in current spirituality. Compared to the letters of John of Salisbury and others, Peter's letters offer little in the way of information about current events, or even commentary on them. Other writers, it is true, occasionally edited out details when letters were revised and collected, but Peter of Blois's letters would not necessarily have been concerned with such details to begin with.[85] They are rather spiritual exhortations and personal complaints, with an occasional bit of autobiographical information, focusing on the spiritual rather than the political. Still, he addressed his letters to many of the luminaries of contemporary ecclesiastical politics, and in so doing he enhances their spiritual charge.

84. Printed in *PL* 77.

85. See Schriber's notes to *The Letter Collections of Arnulf of Lisieux,* esp. 84, 103, 157.

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The unique collection that came of this compilation functions as both less and more than an official register or a collection of sermons.

Hildebert of Lavardin and the Epistolary Tradition

When Peter of Blois presented himself to this epistolary community, he deployed literary traditions in the face of immediate political and professional concerns. The remaining two sections of this chapter will provide case studies of each of these factors that conditioned the creation of the letter collection. Peter consciously placed himself in the tradition of Hildebert of Lavardin, and, early in his career, attached himself to the political fortunes of Reginald de Bohun, archdeacon of Salisbury and then bishop of Bath. These are not intended to be comprehensive studies of the literary genealogy or professional goals of the collection, but merely to provide examples of how the letter collection adapted its sources and adapted itself to its cultural environment.

When Peter took it upon himself to advise the archdeacon of Nantes on the proper education of nephews, he discussed the authors he had read in school, including Priscian, Isidore, Bede, and a host of ancients, but added an intriguing twist by invoking the name of a writer who predated him by only a half century:

> It was of great profit to me that as a boy I was compelled to memorize and store in my heart [*firmare corde tenus reddere adolescentulus compellebar*] the letters of Hildebert, Bishop of Le Mans, which are so extraordinary for the elegance of their style and their refined sweetness.[86]

Through his praise of Hildebert of Lavardin (1056–1133) Peter acknowledged that writer's importance to his own education and suggested a possible source for his conception of the letter collection as a literary form. Perhaps a bit of regional *pietas* motivated this passage, for Peter's education in Hildebert's old haunts in the Loire valley may have endowed him with a natural affinity for the bishop-poet of Le Mans who ended his career as archbishop of Tours. Known primarily as a poet and a leader of cathedral-school education in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Hildebert's charismatic presence apparently extended beyond his death to Peter's formative period in northern France. Like Peter a secular cleric, he played a prominent role in the life of the Anglo-Norman royal family, and left a diverse corpus of works, including sermons, tracts, letters, and

86. *Ep.*101, *PL* 207, 314.

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poems. In Hildebert Peter would have found a model of clerical service in the world and of literary versatility. Poet, humanist, royal adviser, and pastor of a great see, he represented everything the schools had to offer, as well as everything an ambitious young cleric could strive to be.

Scholars have long recognized connections between Peter and Hildebert as letter writers. Southern, although he went into no great detail on the matter in any of his published studies, called Hildebert's collection "Peter's special model," and Köhn has also suggested that Peter consciously followed his example.[87] Hildebert's biographer and interpreter, Peter von Moos, identified two instances in which Peter used phrases also found in Hildebert's letters, although both cases may be the result of a common source.[88] Echoes of Hildebert sound throughout Peter's corpus, but most notably in two places: once in his letters and once in his sermons. Peter incorporated passages from Hildebert's sermon on advent into one of his own sermons and, as Micharl Markowski has shown in an unpublished dissertation, he borrowed his consideration of the Eucharist in Letter 140 from Hildebert's *De sacramento altaris*.[89] Hildebert provided Peter with not only a model for epistolary form, but also with substantive ideas concerning theological questions and the writing of sermons.

To Peter, Hildebert must have seemed a great *modernus*, as is demonstrated by his invocation of the bishop of Le Mans before praising such ancients as Josephus, Suetonius, Tacitus, and Livy, even if this list was borrowed almost verbatim from John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*.[90] Hildebert is the only author Peter adds to John's catalogue, and the only one who lived after the eighth century.[91] Peter gave pride of place to a letter writer from the Loire region whose works had clearly entered the curriculum. Letter writing (and collecting) was a living, contemporary form of expression with a legitimacy gained from the schools. The schools of this region led the way in the French development of the *arst dictandi*, so

87. Southern, "Toward an Edition," 933; Köhn, "Autobiographie und Selbstilisierung," 685, 687, 693.

88. von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin*, 318, 322, 323. He shows that Peter's Letter 15 has a phrase in common with Hildebert's Letter 1.3 (*PL* 171, 145), and Peter's Letter 235 has a phrase in common with Hildebert's Letter 1.6 (*PL* 171, 152). von Moos also sees an echo in Letter 180 attributed to Peter, but that piece is unquestionably spurious (see the appendix, below).

89. Peter of Blois, *Sermo* 2, *PL* 207, 564–68; Hildebert, *De adventu domini sermo septimus*, *PL* 171, 370–76. On the *De sacramento altaris*, see Markowski, "Peter of Blois: Writer and Reformer" (Ph.D. diss., Syracuse University, 1988), 69–70.

90. See the discussion of the letter in chapter 3, below.

91. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* 8.18, ed. Webb, 364.

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Peter had not only Hildebert, but also such writers as Bernard of Meung and the anonymous Orléans compiler of the handbook titled *Aurea gemma Gallica* to draw on.[92] The collections of Peter, Hildebert, and these others form a kind of Loire school of literary letter collections that serve as highly stylized outlets for the learning and experience of high-level ecclesiastics. Peter, however, manipulated the collection in different ways, and to different effect; a comparison of his letters with those of Hildebert offers an illustrative case study of tradition and innovation in twelfth-century epistolography.

The collected letters of the bishop of Le Mans came to Peter as models for style and content; the differences in Peter's use of the genre suggest how it could be manipulated to suit the situation of the writer-compiler. Peter's affinity with his mentor, however, may have gone further. His prominence in Peter's education, their mutual association with the Loire region, and Hildebert's status as a representative of what R. I. Moore has called "a new and cosmopolitan clerical elite, which was defined by ordination, but distinguished and united by its common Latin culture," show that, educationally and vocationally, the two men were cut from the same cloth.[93]

Hildebert's letters enjoyed wide popularity from the time of their writing, as shown by Peter of Blois's praise and by two references in Peter the Chanter's *Verbum Abbreviatum*.[94] Although the letters survive in a great many manuscripts, which perplexed scholars right through the twentieth century, the tradition is less complicated than that of Peter's epistles. Scholarly work, culminating with that of Peter von Moos, has demonstrated that Hildebert probably compiled a collection of fifty-six or fifty-seven letters in his lifetime, while another thirty-six were added and circulated after his death.[95] A collection of ninety-two or ninety-three letters thus began circulating in the Middle Ages, and Rolf Köhn found it significant that the earliest compilation of Peter's letter collection contains roughly the same number.[96] The collection also resembles that of Peter of Blois in the diversity of its contents. Using categories similar to

92. For Bernard of Meung, see above, n. 17; for the *Aurea gemma Gallica*, see *Repertorium der Artes Dictandi I*, 119–22.

93. R. I. Moore, "Literacy and the Making of Heresy," 29.

94. Von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin*, 39; Peter the Chanter, *Verbum Abbreviatum* 66, 100, *PL* 205, 185, 283.

95. Von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin*, 323–336. Cf. Köhn, "Autobiographie und Selbstilisierung," 687; and A. Dieudonné, *Hildebert de Lavardin, Évêque du Mans, Archévêque du Tours (1056–1133): Sa vie, ses lettres* (Paris and Manners, 1898), 115–29.

96. Köhn, "Auotbiographie und Selbstilisierung," 693. See also the appendix, below.

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but more specific than those listed in Table 2, Von Moos identified some twenty types of letters in Hildebert's corpus, ranging from "adminstrativ-politische Briefe" to "preziöse Sympathie- und Freundschaftsbriefe" and "Direketionsbriefe an Damen."[97] His letters, like Peter's, include epistolary sermons, business letters, eulogies, and invectives, reflecting, as may be expected, the spiritual, political, and diocesan concerns of a twelfth-century bishop. Hildebert's collection, however, contains a far greater amount of poetry, and even "letters in verse."[98] Peter attached poems to the earlier versions of Letter 57, showing that he followed Hildebert in using letters to introduce poetry, but he seems to have been less interested in including poems with his collected letters.[99]

Von Moos classifies fifteen (sixteen percent) of Hildebert's letters as "Adminstrativ-politischebriefe" and another ten (eleven percent) as "kanonistische und kirchendisziplinarische Briefe."[100] Thus over a quarter of Hildebert's collection is devoted to administrative and legal matters, while only about ten percent of Peter's letters concern matters of law, procedure, or administration.[101] Since Peter never obtained a bishopric, this difference seems quite natural. There are other significant contrasts between the two collections that show how Peter deviated from Hildebert's example in order to represent his own experience, especially with regard to recipients. Forty-eight percent of Hildebert's letters were addressed to the highest ranks of the clergy (abbots, bishops and archbishops, legates, cardinals, and popes), while only seventeen percent were addressed to the middle and lower ranks. Table 1, on p. 65, shows that Peter's letters also included a large percentage (forty-four) addressed to bishops, abbots, and popes, but that thirty-three percent were intended for the clerics of less than exalted status, that is, archdeacons, deans, secular canons, and the like. The most telling difference, however, may lie in the number of letters addressed to laymen. Hildebert wrote twenty percent of his letters to kings, queens, counts, and other laypeople, while Peter only addressed four percent of the letters written in his own name to that same group. This difference results, in all likelihood, from Hildebert's position as, to use the words of Reto Bezzola, "the official court poet of England."[102] The bishop of Le Mans held a keen interest in the

97. von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin*, 49–51.

98. Ibid.

99. On the poems attached to Letter 57, see Southern, "The Necessity for Two Peters of Blois." They are printed in *Petri Blesensis Carmina*, ed. Wollin, nos. 1.1–1.5, pp. 229–74.

100. von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin*, 49–51.

101. Ibid.

102. Bezzola, *Les origines* (Paris, 1960), 2.2:433.

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spiritual and political fortunes of the royal family and other nobles, and used his letters to exhort them to the Christian life. He had a running correspondence with Mathilda, wife of Henry I of England, in which he congratulated her on her wedding, thanked her for gifts, and politely lauded her good health.[103] He also exhorted the count of Anjou to look after his dominions and desist from a lengthy pilgrimage. The intimacy between Hildebert and these nobles certainly served political purposes, and he was sure to cast himself as the good shepherd keeping the royal house in order. Peter's letters, by contrast, seldom venture outside his own *ordo*—they focus far more on the clergy. He presented himself as a spiritual adviser of Henry II, but Henry is the only important layman to whom Peter writes in his own name. Although Peter wrote, or at least collected, few letters to Henry II, he dedicated several tracts to the king, including the *Compendium in Job* and the no longer extant *De praestigiis fortunae*. The only other significant laypeople in the list of Peter's recipients are the Young King and Eleanor of Aquitaine, whom Peter discouraged from rebellion when writing in the name of Archbishop Rotrou of Rouen. But Peter was not shy in writing to exalted persons in the Church hierarchy, and he sprinkled letters to noteworthy addressees throughout his collection. In Hildebert's collection he had readily available models for epistolary treatment of high-ranking laymen, but he chose to represent a different set of problems in his literary monument and in so doing deviated from the example of the bishop of Le Mans.

The two writers display similar levels of Latinity, though Peter more consistently wrote in a highly adorned style, despite his protests of *ruditas* in the dedicatory letter to Henry II. Hildebert's collection includes, for example, a number of short, simple letters of recommendation, or briefs of recent goings-on, that have no parallel in Peter's collection. Both writers make occasional use of the *cursus*, albeit not as pronounced a use as can be found in many other letter writers of the period. Janson's study of the medieval *cursus* has shown that Peter used a greater range of rhythmic clause endings, and used them with slightly greater frequency, which could be explained by the greater penetration of *dictamen* in northern France during his lifetime.[104] Moreover, neither author slavishly followed the traditional division of the letter into *salutatio, exordium, narratio, petitio,* and *conclusio*.[105] The general similarities are numerous enough to show a similar conception of the letter collection as a literary expression

103. Hildebert, *Epp.* 1.7, 1.9, 3.11, 3.12.
104. Janson, *Prose Rhythms,* 113–14.
105. See von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin,* 78–79.

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of several facets of clerical life, and perhaps even that Peter saw Hildebert's collection as a definite model. The evidence, however, points to slightly greater polish in Peter's collection, and he collected fewer letters of a sort that would call for a "low" style.

Peter's letters are also more concerned to correct others through rebuke and invective and with complaining about hardships visited on him by rivals. Since Hildebert as a bishop would have been in the business of dispensing, rather than fighting for, prebends and other positions, this last difference should not come as any surprise. Hildebert's pastoral letters include more expressions of encouragement and exhortation, often to the high-ranking nobility, than rebukes for spiritual failings. The difference suggests a crucial respect in which Peter did not so much follow a literary model as adapt it to the circumstances of his own career. While Hildebert's letters portray the bishop's activities as an administrator and politician, Peter's descend into the uncertain world of the middling clergy, and tackle problems not germane to Hildebert's epistolary program. Peter's relationship to his literary predecessor can also be examined, in a more specific manner, through the letters in the respective collections that serve similar rhetorical purposes.

One example of a subdivision of the epistolary genre common to both authors is that of letters of monastic direction written to women.[106] These exhortations to embrace a new life are common in the twelfth century, and appear in the letters of Abelard, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Peter the Venerable. Peter of Blois wrote three letters of congratulation to novice nuns, while Hildebert of Lavardin wrote a series of some ten pieces concerning the spiritual life of noblewomen, including widows and *conversae*. Many of the same images appear in both letter collections—the quest for a heavenly *bravium*, the *thesaurus* of chastity, and the difficulty of leaving the courtly life for the rigors of the monastery—but the resemblance is not remarkably close. What is striking is the manner in which these "Direktionsbriefe an Damen," to use von Moos's phrase, fit into the larger collections. Peter's recipients cannot be identified (beyond the Christian names given in the salutations), but Hildebert addressed his advice to well-known figures at the Anglo-Norman court, and goes into some detail about their lives and the immediate difficulties to which the letters address themselves. Mathilda, the wife of Henry I, appears

106. On Peter's letters to and about women, see Markowski, "Treatment of Women in Peter of Blois' Letter Collection," in *Minorities and Barbarians in Medieval Life and Thought*, ed. Susan Ridyard and Robert G. Benson, Sewanee Medieval Studies 7 (Sewanee: University of the South Press, 1996), 63–71.

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to have been a special spiritual charge of the bishop, and received advice about life events specific to a noblewoman. With his letters of direction, he fulfilled his duty as an adviser to the nobility and perhaps advanced his political standing by cementing the bonds with important magnates. Peter, on the other hand, almost certainly more of an outsider to the royal court and in deacon's orders at the time, did not find himself given the care of a great lady's soul. Compared to Hildebert's recipients, Peter's are overwhelmingly male, the most significant exception being Eleanor of Aquitaine. Even the exception may prove the rule: the letters written to Eleanor in the 1170s on the revolt of the Young King are sharply worded rebukes peppered with smug references to Scripture on the subject of female inferiority. Peter's collection records the rough-and-tumble male world of the secular clergy, while Hildebert enters into the inner world of the court to advise its female inhabitants.

Letter 2, a consolation to Henry II after the death of Henry the Young King in 1183, even more clearly typifies a letter for which Peter could have followed Hildebert's example. Almost from the moment of his coronation in 1170, the younger Henry had found ways of irritating and threatening his father, often with the help of, and always much to the delight of, the king of France. The revolt of 1173 posed special danger to Henry II's rule on the Continent, but, once he had consolidated his position, his sons' periodic rebellions were more a nuisance than a menace, at least until the 1180s.[107] It was while leading one such later insurrection that the Young King fell ill and died, and though the event must have some brought some relief to the bewildered father, the *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi* assured readers that the elder Henry "with great wailing and horrible weeping beat himself mournfully, and he exceeded moderation in his self-affliction more than could be believed [*et plus quam credi potuit modum plangendi excessit*]." In the eulogy attributed to the king, however, he acknowledged that, but for paternal affection, it might seem like an occasion for rejoicing.[108] The chronicle thus recognized the ambiguity of the situation while attesting to the king's tears. Peter of Blois responded with a formal letter of consolation, making no mention of the Young King's incorrigibility, which was so great that Henry considered reports of his illness to be a ruse.[109]

Hildebert had written a similar consolation to Henry II's grandfather, Henry I, upon the death of his son William in the famously tragic

107. See W. L. Warren, *Henry II* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), 580–93.

108. *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, ed. William Stubbs, RS 49.1 (London, 1867), 301–2.

109. Warren, *Henry II*, 593.

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sinking of the White Ship in 1120. The drowning of Henry I's only legitimate son was one of the key events in the political history of the period, as it ultimately helped foster the anarchy of King Stephen's reign, and was even the subject of poetry.[110] The king, by all accounts, was devastated: no doubt a man in need of consolation. Hildebert's letter, a brooding, philosophically wrought exhortation to self-understanding, has puzzled scholars, including A. Dieudonné, who considered it inappropriate to the situation.[111] Von Moos has taken a different view, finding in the piece not empty rhetoric but a deep and moving statement of a ruler's obligations.[112]

The letter, rich with Stoic sentiment, urges the king to overcome his sorrow by recognizing the futility of grief and turning his mind to the need to order his soul properly. "Although you rule well enough over many," he begins, "you ought to rule none better than yourself."[113] He proceeds with an exposition on the *scito te ipsum* theme, and why self-knowledge is especially important for a ruler, before entering into a discussion of Fortune and a king's need to be prepared for whatever it may offer. Hildebert moves on to a discussion of the ideal ruler, ruled by his own reason, which he must use for the common good. Classical ethics meet Anglo-Norman power as self-knowledge becomes a prerequisite for authority.[114] Conspicuous in his absence from the main body of the letter is Prince William himself, the subject of the consolation. The death of the prince provided a convenient starting point for Hildebert's Stoic musings, which are nonetheless not irrelevant.

Peter's work of consolation to Henry II dwells less on abstract ethical principles and stays focused on the death in question, though it echoes Hildebert's admonitory words of sympathy. Peter's letter is that of a pastor, not a philosopher. He mildly rebukes the king for his excessive weeping (attested by the *Gesta Regis*), and accuses him of compromising his fiery spirit with "a certain womanish softness."[115] After a series of scriptural exempla of weeping, including Jesus' tears for Lazarus and Abraham's for Sara (exempla not present in Hildebert's letter), he urges that "grief may not seize you beyond all measure," and that he should look to

110. Bezzola, *Les origines*, 415–16.

111. Dieudonné, *Hildebert de Lavardin*, 210.

112. von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin*, 107–12.

113. "Cum bene multis imperes, nulli melius imperas quam tibi": Hildebert, *Ep.* 1.12, *PL* 171, 172.

114. See von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin*, 109.

115. ". . . vestra magnanimitas . . . quadam mollitia muliebri degenerans": *Ep.* 2, 4.

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the joys of the next world rather than the sorrows of the present one.[116] Unlike Hildebert, Peter eulogizes the deceased:

> While he, more than all other mortals, gained glory and pre-eminence over the *militia saecularis*, he also, because of his rejection of worldly things and the humility of his penitence became and died a soldier of Christ. He gave you an example that you might follow in the footsteps of a penitent [1 Peter 2:21]. For no one was more humble in confession, more contrite in rebuking himself, more devout in correcting himself, more vigorous in the affliction of his own flesh, or more fervent in making satisfaction.[117]

This passage, striking in that hardly a word of it is true, offers spiritual counsel through example while showing respect for the dead. Peter concludes that human suffering should lead to penitence rather than grief, because the things of the world are false while God's judgment is eternal. He uses this strange consolation to push Henry to turn worldly sorrow into spiritual profit through penitence, a common theme in Peter's collection.

The letter may in fact reveal as much about Peter as about Henry. The position of the letter in the collection is also significant, since it immediately follows the dedicatory epistle which presents the compilation of letters as concerned with salvation; this letter begins his instruction through direct reference to Henry's sufferings. Seneca's letters also stressed the need for moderation in weeping, but Peter keeps the Stoic influence at this superficial level—he does not go as deeply into the subject as Hildebert. While the inclusion of a consolation to a monarch may represent the influence of Hildebert's letters, Peter's words of sympathy fit neatly with other letters in his collection that advise, rebuke, and focus on the health of the addressees' souls. The consolation to Henry II illustrates Peter's conception of letters as pastoral exhortations, and displays common features of his collection as a whole. The contrast is telling, since it exemplifies the main concerns of Peter's collection, and how these concerns led him away from his "special model." Still, the letter to Henry also suggests a sense of literary duty, of including a royal consolation prominently in the collection because Hildebert does. Doing so allowed the author to take on a weighty matter in high style while also demonstrating his political importance.

Although Peter did not depend entirely on Hildebert for his epistolary style or for his ethics, considered together the two writers do rep-

116. Ibid., 5.
117. *Ep.* 2, *PL* 207, 6–7.

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resent a short-lived Loire tradition of epistolography. Peter's collection sprang at least in part from his northern French schooling. He addressed himself to a different segment of society, placed greater emphasis on his own struggles, and found new ways to approach the same topics. While Hildebert confronted the problems of the highest prelates and the secular court of Henry I, Peter turned his attention more often to the problems of the middle clergy and the correction of personal vice. In several respects Peter's collection recalls that of Hildebert more than that of his contemporaries in the clergy of the Angevin Empire, in that its scope is diverse and it is not entirely concerned with political or diocesan matters. Both Hildebert and Peter looked to spiritual and literary concerns in producing their collections, but the letters of both men also commented insightfully on immediate experience. Neither writer wrote merely to provide examples of the *ars dictandi*, yet they were concerned with style and saw letters as ideal vehicles for flights of literary prowess. Ultimately Peter, though he may have gained his conception of the epistolary genre from Hildebert, wrote letters suited to an archdeacon, and modified that genre in light of his own agenda.

Power, Patronage, and the Letters from Peter of Blois to Reginald of Salisbury

Peter of Blois adapted the epistolary tradition in the face of the power relations of the Church under the Angevins. Because he found himself just below the highest ranks of the hierarchy, he constantly sought patrons, and therefore the power relations between the higher clergy conditioned the writing and collection of his letters. While Peter had no single close circle of correspondents, his collection does provide evidence for a continuing relationship with Reginald of Salisbury, bishop of Bath. The series of letters to Reginald offer a veritable cross-section of Peter's collection. Peter wrote to Reginald on his favorite topics—his own career, the spiritual health of individuals, his role as a writer and adviser—in letters with different purposes, such as recommendations, rebukes, congratulations, and apologies, all to a highly influential cleric from an elite family. In this way, they illustrate Peter's use of the epistolary genre to communicate with his superiors and intimates. These are also letters, however, that Peter consciously chose to collect, revise, and circulate to his chosen audience as representative of his experience many years after they were originally written. One of the Reginald letters was drastically revised between 1184 and circa 1195, while another was left out of the lat-

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est compilations of the collection. Close reading of this part of Peter's correspondence demonstrates how he worked, revisiting topics and so changing the nature of his literary monument over time.

When Peter came to England in the 1170s, he may already have known Reginald for some time, perhaps first at Paris where he possibly served as Reginald's master or tutor before or during the latter's service at the Capetian court. Reginald probably had some role in Peter's move across the Channel from Rouen to Canterbury, and he presumably helped Peter secure the archdeaconry of Bath in his diocese.[118] While scholars have generally assumed that their relationship was a close one, the two men in fact hovered between extremes of affection and outright hostility toward each other. Six of Peter's letters to Reginald have survived, five of them in the main collection. Of these, two are from Reginald's time as archdeacon of Salisbury (where his father Jocelin was bishop) up to 1174, three from the months after his election to the see of Bath in that year, and one from sometime before 1184 but during Reginald's episcopacy. The letters in fact reveal a great deal of ambiguity, and provide a record of a sometimes tense and difficult friendship.

Letters 61 and 85 mark the earliest datable correspondence from Peter to Reginald, both ostensibly composed during the latter's time as archdeacon of Salisbury in the late 1160s and early 1170s. In both of them Peter, styling himself a sage pastor counseling a wayward sheep back to the fold, rebuked Reginald for his neglect of the morality associated with the reform movement. These are not especially friendly letters, and Peter uncharacteristically made no apology for his criticism. By contrast, when Peter chided Archbishop Richard for allowing his reputation to suffer as a result of his inactivity, he took great pains to explain that his remarks were in his master's best interest.[119] Letter 85 to Reginald gets straight to the point:

> If I am telling you things that are harsher and more scolding than usual, it is your insolence that has brought it to this, and because your iniquity comes from your gluttony (although I have guarded against it with many friendly and mild exhortations), it does not allow for the benefit of correction. If you thought about the health of your soul, or even about the well-being of your body, you would obey your soul more than your body, and your belly less than your spirit. You have conspired toward the peril of your own soul, and so you beg for help for the oppression of your belly, whose gluttony, while it desires to

118. See above, chapter 1, notes 54–56.
119. *Ep.* 5, *PL* 207, 13–16.

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live by devouring all things, kills the soul by means of its voracity and obscures the light of the inner man.[120]

He follows this *exordium*, hardly a *captatio benevolentiae*, with a string of classical allusions to rulers who were brought to ruin by gluttony. The use of secular rulers as examples for the archdeacon itself implies an additional criticism, namely, that Reginald eschewed proper clerical behavior. Peter, once again taking the role of shepherd and adviser, attacks all forms of gluttony and pursuit of worldly pleasures, and urges the archdeacon to look to the things in heaven while fasting on earth. If Reginald was Peter's friend, the description of gluttony and avarice in this letter does him no credit. The letter appears even in the earliest versions of Peter's collection, suggesting that Peter felt no compelling need at any time after around 1184 to portray Reginald in a uniformly favorable light. At best the letter presents him as an example to avoid. Peter's moral exhortation to clean living may, through its inclusion in the collection, serve a polemical purpose against his erstwhile friend.

In Letter 61 Peter again went after Reginald, this time targeting his passion for hunting, and demanded that he look to his spiritual sheep and not his falcons. Again, Peter did not apologize or ask for forgiveness for his presumption, as he sometimes did when rebuking fellow clerics. Although the letter makes no reference to Reginald as a bishop-elect, Peter does hint at his imminent elevation to the episcopacy with the words "you have not risen to a seat of episcopal eminence, which God willing will happen soon."[121] He then expresses a decidedly reform-minded view of episcopal duty and inveighs against courtly pursuits, especially hunting:

> Since, as Jerome says, I do not know what hidden energy the living voice holds, I have first with my living voice and devoted supplication, and now with letters, warned you that you should indulge more sparingly in the empty pleasure of the courtiers' birds.[122]

Political power, reform, and patronage all collide in the letter as Peter collected it, and it can be read as any number of things. As a literary exercise or minisermon, it is a ringing call for reform; as historical correspondence, it provides an example of a powerful cleric running foul of a self-styled reformer; as biography, it recalls a tense stage in a deteriorating relationship.

120. *Ep.* 85, *PL* 207, 259.
121. *Ep.* 61, *PL* 207, 184.
122. *Ep.* 61, *PL* 207, 181–82. The quotation from Jerome is from his Letter 53.

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Reginald, however, illustrates the contradictions and possibilities of clerical culture just as clearly as Peter's own career does. For Peter also saw fit to defend his friend and pupil in letters where cynical self-interest and spiritual ideals cannot always be disentangled. In the late 1160s, Reginald, along with his father Jocelin, opposed Thomas Becket and earned the ire of Becket's partisans. After Becket was gone, Henry the Young King, son of Henry II, contested Reginald's elevation to Bath. Both episodes created rifts among the clergy and exposed the ambitions of Henry II to use the Church to further his conception of kingship. On these occasions Peter entered the fray on Reginald's behalf, probably because his intimacy with the young scion of the Bohuns compromised his position with some elements of the clergy. At the height of the Becket controversy Peter wrote Letter 24 to the archbishop's *familiares* to deny charges that Reginald had slandered Becket, and to explain his own relationship to him.

Defending Reginald and his father against the attacks of the Becket party seems to have been something of a cause célèbre among the English clergy. John of Salisbury, Arnulf of Lisieux, and Gilbert Foliot all wrote letters exonerating him or his father, so Peter may have had a larger political, or even literary, point to make with these intercessions.[123] Peter furthermore had a personal interest in mitigating any damage his association with Reginald may have caused his own reputation. He makes it quite clear by his opening remarks that he is not implicit in any of Reginald's alleged transgressions:

> You grieve and complain that I have betaken myself to the archdeacon of Salisbury; if it is a crime to go near him, necessity excuses me. I say to you by the word of the Lord [1 Thess. 4:15] that I neither knew nor heard that your lord [Becket] had conceived any rancor or hatred against him. And now I know that he desires with his whole heart to be reconciled with your lord and, if an evil man had not already got in the way, he would have already thrown himself humbly at his feet, so as to make satisfaction for all things. At this time I expect his correction and conversion daily, and to this end I am applying diligent effort.[124]

In the ensuing letter Peter describes Reginald as a horse with no rider, under the influence of Jocelin's partisans.[125] While Peter notes that his patron is a *homo circumspectus et industrius* and hence a valuable ally, he devotes greatest attention to emphasizing the need for Becket, described as a *sanctus*, to effect Reginald's *correctio* through letters and for-

123. See below, chapter 5.
124. *Ep.* 24, *PL* 207, 86.
125. *Ep.* 24, 86.

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giveness.[126] Given that Peter anticipates Becket's sainthood in a letter purporting to date to around 1169, the letter clearly representes Peter's construction of an epistolary relationship after the fact. While this may detract from the piece's value as a direct historical record of the events leading up to Becket's death, it certainly adds to our understanding of how Peter manipulated his letter collection to present relationships as he saw them at the time he compiled his letters. This letter concludes with another disclaimer:

> An uneasy anxiety has me concerned about the conversion and salvation of the archdeacon. For I cannot fail to love this man who so frequently has brought me into his blessings.[127]

The "blessings" *(benedictiones)* Peter has in mind undoubtedly include the largesse one would expect from the son of an influential family, and as a result the letter sounds more than a little self-serving. Peter calls attention to his belief that the archdeacon needs reform, and that he is essentially working on Becket's behalf, reading Scripture with Reginald and looking after his morals, but nonetheless sticks to his side because of this concern and his professional ties. The portrayal of the writer is entirely sympathetic. A devoted adviser, he is compelled to serve a wayward sheep, and is not at all complicit in any schemes against the archbishop of Canterbury; Reginald's character and Peter's opinion of it are secondary considerations. This letter of recommendation for a patron thus becomes an *apologia* for its author cloaked as an exhortation to *caritas*.

Another letter, written after Becket's murder when several bishops and the king himself required absolution, praises Reginald with far less ambiguity and affirms that Reginald is *homo innocens*. It claims that devotion to his father Jocelin inspired him to slander the martyr. "But if the aforementioned elect attempted any affront to the martyr, he has surely cleansed it with great alms, profuse tears and rigorous discipline."[128] It is perhaps strange that Peter attributes *austeriores disciplinae* to a man he elsewhere had accused of gluttony. The changing circumstances of the relationship lead to the use of different ideals and corruptions of the ideal. Despite his praise for Reginald's penance, he devotes that final quarter of this letter to deferring judgment to God alone, and emphasizing how the

126. *Ep.* 24, 88.

127. Ibid.

128. ". . . quod si praefatus electus aliquid attentaverit in contumeliam martyris, illud exipiavit asperitate cilicii, largioribus eleemosynis, lacrymis profusioribus, et austerioribus disciplinis": *Ep.* 45, *PL* 207, 132. Peter used a similar defense on behalf of Henry II. See below, chapter 5.

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good and bad cannot be distinguished while they are on earth. In heaven, after all, the last will be first and the first last (Matt. 20), and Reginald may end up ranked at least ahead of his accusers.[129] At this point, whether for literary, political, or personal reasons, Peter of Blois found enough worthwhile qualities in Reginald to defend him in writing. Furthermore, he saw fit to include this letter in his collection, where it testifies to Peter's place in the English clergy and, very much like an epistolary sermon, warns against hypocritical judgments and affirms the power of penitence.

Letters of congratulation offer another glimpse at the relationship between the two men and how it influenced the development of the letter collection. Letter 225, written sometime after his election, never found its way into Peter's main collection, and it is easy to see why—it is a shameless plea for a prebend. It begins with groveling ("I shall speak to my lord though I am but ash and dust")[130] and proceeds to remind Reginald of his loyalty before ultimately accompanying his request with outright threats:

> After great and varied afflictions of fortune, finally resting from the storm in port, through the grace of Jesus Christ, I beg your mercy that, by consideration of mercy and at the instigation of God you will cast more merciful eyes on me and hold out the hand of munificence to me, your slave, in the first assignment of a vacant prebend. . . . Indeed I could have coercive letters sent from the lord king of England and in the name of the lord pope, but I come to my lord humbly and modestly, wishing rather to obtain it through mercy than to extort it through violence.[131]

Peter could whine, beg, and threaten at the same time, and rather skillfully at that. His appeal to higher authorities to get his way suggests that he had no guarantees of benefiting from Reginald's accession, and perhaps that he had reason to doubt that it would benefit him. The letter provides a helpful instance of what Peter left *out* of the collection. It is a short businesslike letter with few adornments, and presents the author in a less-than-favorable light. In addition, this piece leaves little doubt as to its purpose or function. It definitively illustrates, as Wahlgren has remarked, that Peter expected his friendship with Reginald to "pay off."[132]

Another piece commemorating Reginald's election (this one included in the first version of the collection) portrays Peter's loyalty in a slightly

129. *Ep.* 45, 132. 130. *Ep.* 225, *PL* 207, 514.
131. *Ep.* 225, 514.
132. Cf. Wahlgren, "Peter of Blois and the Later Career of Reginald of Salisbury," 1211.

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different vein. Letter 163 congratulates Reginald on his election, and highlights Peter's devotion with special attention to the disinterested nature of Peter's service, while thanking the elected for his past kindness: "I call God and my conscience as witnesses, that I do not congratulate you on your election in order to conceive in it some hope of my own promotion, but because I see in it the satisfaction of my own desires."[133] Like the earlier request for a prebend, this letter is short and relatively unadorned, with none of the conventional language of friendship. Peter portrays himself as solicitous of the new bishop's safety and as a loyal follower, but he offers no specific information about his relationship to Reginald. He did not include the piece in any of the later versions of his letter collection, either because as a short business letter it did not match the rest of the collection stylistically, or because he no longer wished to portray himself as the doting admirer of the bishop of Bath. Some letters, then, either dropped out of the later issues of the collection when Peter pursued different angles in ecclesiastical politics, or never found their way into the collection at all.

Another letter of congratulation to Reginald illustrates the most intriguing phenomenon in the development of Peter's collection: the wholesale altering of the contents of an individual letter. Letter 30 appears in all versions of the collection but underwent a substantial revision by the mid-1190s. The implications of this revision have been the subject of intense scholarly attention. Lena Wahlgren included a modern edition of the letter in her study of the manuscript tradition of Peter's letters.[134] The first version, here referred to, following Wahlgren, as 30A, congratulated Reginald on his election and assured him that his consecration was in fact imminent. It begins with a friendship statement that leads smoothly into an account of a dream vision:

> And so while the day brings me your presence by way of waking images, night offers it to me incessantly in visions, but now I see in you titles of a new majesty not yet seen, and perhaps my mind, eager for your promotion, either senses what has already been done, or presages what will be done soon with a more certain wish. With God and my conscience as witnesses I will relate this. On the Sunday when *ego sum pastor bonus* [John 10:14] is sung it seemed to me in my sleep that you were adorned with priestly clothing by a certain great and venerable person, who displayed the stature of the bishop of Evreux and the age of the archbishop of Rouen.[135]

133. *Ep.* 163, *PL* 207, 458.
134. Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 180–85.
135. "Vestram itaque praesentiam mihi imaginationibus dies, visionibus noctes offerunt in-

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Peter sets the stage with a good omen *(ego sum pastor bonus)* and a reference to Archbishop Rotrou of Rouen, his sometime employer and a reliable defender of Reginald and his father Jocelin. The bishop of Evreux at the time was Giles, Rotrou's nephew and another potential ally.[136] Neither Giles nor Rotrou actually consecrated Reginald (this was done by Richard, the new archbishop of Canterbury), but, given the climate of ecclesiastical politics, as well as Peter's own network of patrons and employers, the references to them have a definite point.

As the dream continues, Peter gladly assists the venerable person with the consecration, only to discover that Reginald has neither ring nor sandals, a detail which almost certainly refers to the fact that the consecrations of bishops elevated in 1173 were delayed because of the Young King's protests. The venerable person informs Peter that Reginald will have a bejeweled *(lapideum)* rather than a gold ring, presumably until his consecration. It falls to Peter to procure the sandals:

> But when I entered the vestry of the church of Rouen, I saw a young layman [*adolescens laicus*] dressed in silk carrying the sandals, and, by offering two silver coins, which he accepted, I wrenched them from the grasp of this reluctant young man.[137]

The meaning of this passage is fairly clear, and was first suggested by E. S. Cohn.[138] The *adolescens* ought to represent Henry the Young King, who delayed Reginald's consecration by protesting his lack of participation in the appointment. Peter's role in the dream is probably more indicative of his loyalty to Reginald than anything he actually did to assist the bishop-elect. It is doubtful, for example, that the two coins imply that Peter helped Reginald acquire the office through simony—Peter could admit fault but he would have had no reason to implicate himself in the sin that was the worst bête noire of the reform movement.[139] The dream comes to Peter on each of the two nights following, and its accuracy is

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cessanter, sed nunc in vobis non prius aspectos titulos novae majestatis intueor, et fortasse mens anxia de vestra promotione vel quod factum est iam sentit, vel quod in proximo futurum est voto certiore praesagit. Deo teste et conscientia mea loquor. Dominica illa qua cantatur 'Ego sum pastor bonus' mihi videbatur in somno quod te pontificalibus indumentis ornabat quaedam praegrandis et reverenda persona, quae statura Ebroicensem episcopum, Rothomagensem vero archiepiscopum praeferebat aetate": *Ep.* 30A, Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 180.

136. Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 176.

137. "Cumque vestiarium ecclesiae Rothomagensis intrassem, adolescens laicus indutus sericis sandalia deferebat, oblatisque duobus nummis argenteis et ab eo receptis, sandalia de manu ipsius licet indignantis extorsi": *Ep.* 30A, Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 181.

138. Cohn, "Manuscript Evidence," 57–58.

139. See Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 176.

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confirmed to his satisfaction when he opens the psalter and reads the words *Moyses et Aaron in sacerdotibus eius* (Ps. 98.6). By seeking verification from a sacred text, Peter takes upon himself the traditional task of seeking a *sors Biblica*, a prophetic statement from a biblical source opened at random. English bishops in the twelfth century, however, more typically drew their *sortes* from the New Testament than the psalter.[140]

After claiming ignorance of his vision's real meaning, Peter concludes the letter by expressing the wish that the dream come true. As Wahlgren has observed, dreams figure prominently in other noteworthy consecrations of the period, including Baldwin of Ford and Thomas Becket, both also elected to Canterbury.[141] Again, political and literary elements converge in Peter's writing, for he reassures a friend of success while engaging in a common conceit. In the letter collection it stands as testament to Peter's abilities as a writer, to his loyalty, and to his prominence in ecclesiastical politics. But it also shows how unstable and deceptive the epistolary genre can be.

When Peter reassembled his letter collection in the 1190s, he significantly revised a single passage of this letter; Wahlgren has edited the later version and labeled it 30B. Between 1174 and Reginald's death in 1191, Peter's relationship with the bishop worsened, and political developments aggravated the palpable tension between them. In 1189, they found themselves on the opposite sides of the dispute involving Christ Church, Canterbury. While Peter of Blois helped Archbishop Baldwin advance a plan to found a collegiate church that threatened to strip the Christ Church monks of much of their political influence, Reginald became the monks' great defender. His support had political implications, as illustrated when the monks went against the wishes of the king and other bishops and elected him to fill the archiepiscopal vacancy created by Baldwin's death. In a later letter Peter refers to him as *aliquem magni nominis umbram*, and seems to have felt quite vindicated by his premature death.[142] Letter 27 furthermore complains of the uncanonical nature of Reginald's election to Canterbury.[143] Bad blood ensuing from these disputes may have found expression in the revision of the "dream" letter. The revised version is

140. George Henderson "*Sortes Biblicae* in Twelfth-Century England: The List of Episcopal Prognostics in Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.7.5," in *England in the Twelfth Century: Proceedings of the 1988 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Daniel Williams (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell Press, 1990), 113–35.

141. Wahlgren, "Peter of Blois and the Later Career of Reginald," 1202–3.

142. *Later Letters*, no. 53.

143. *Ep.* 27, *PL* 207, 94–95.

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identical to the original save for one passage. In the original, Peter noted that Reginald had neither sandals nor ring and receives instructions from a venerable person to search for the sandals before receiving assurance that Reginald would be consecrated. In 30B, the venerable person offers a modified prophecy:

> His mother will eventually give him even more precious sandals and a greater ring, through the cunning of a young man who will be promised a crown by a priest; but the expectations of both will be frustrated. This one will be go off to join his fathers, the other, having left and returned, will use what was offered him. You will know him, because when he has received the silver coins, you will wrench both sandals from him.[144]

The interpretation of this passage is not as obvious as that of its counterpart in 30A. The "mother" in question is undoubtedly the Church, but from there the matter becomes more difficult. By 1191 the Young King and his father were both dead. Cohn and Wahlgren have convincingly argued that the larger ring and more precious sandals refer to Reginald's election to Canterbury in 1191.[145] The identities of the priest and the young man are also elusive, though Prince John, who had coveted the crown of Jerusalem before seeking to undermine the rule of his brother Richard (not without the support of some clergy), and who helped preside over Reginald's election, is the best candidate.[146] Monika Asztalos has objected to Wahlgren's and Cohn's readings on the grounds that grammatically *iste* does not necessarily refer to Reginald, and that an archbishop receives not a bigger ring but a pallium.[147] Wahlgren has shown that in some cases *iste* can refer to a term not immediately antecedent if it is closest to a speaker's mind.[148] The argument concerning the use of *pallium* in consecrations, though technically accurate, is not necessarily damning, since Peter is clearly speaking metaphorically of Canterbury as a *maiorem anulum*—a greater prize for an ambitious ecclesiastic.

144. "Pretiosiora vero sandalia et maiorem anulum sua mater ei tandem datura est, per astutiam adolescentis cui a sacerdote corona promittetur, sed uterque sua expecatione fraudabitur. Iste cito transibit ad patres, ille aversus et reversus donativis utetur. Unum scias, quia recepetis argenteis utraque sandalia extorquebis": *Ep.* 30B, Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 184.

145. Cohn, "Manuscript Evidence," 57–58; Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 176–78, and "Peter of Blois and the Later Career of Reginald of Salisbury," 1203–4.

146. Wahlgren, "Peter of Blois and the Later Career of Reginald of Salisbury," 1213.

147. Asztalos, review of Wahlgren, *The Letter Collections of Peter of Blois: Studies in the Manuscript Tradition*, in *Speculum* 68 (1994): 1294.

148. Wahlgren, "Peter of Blois and the Later Career of Reginald," 1208, citing J. B. Hofman, *Lateinische Syntax und Stylistik*, rev. Anton Szantyr (Munich, 1965), 182, and Rafael Kühner and Carl Stgeman, *Ausfürliche Grammatik der lateinische Sprache* (Leverkusen, 1955), 1:623.

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What is certain is that Peter did modify this letter, probably in light of events of the early 1190s. He not only changed the details noted above, but he drastically diminished his own role in the dream. The action is all in the future tense—Peter does not mention actually acquiring the sandals or offering any money to the *adolescens*, and does not wait upon Reginald as he did in the first version. Furthermore, the notion that Reginald will receive the ring and sandals *per astutiam adolescentis* does not reflect very favorably on him. This, along with the reference to Reginald's untimely death, makes for a most curious letter of congratulation. It is extremely unlikely, if not altogether impossible, that letter 30B represents a new letter sent to Reginald to congratulate him on his new election. Peter's collection was itself a living document that could reflect developments occurring between the various reissues, while retaining earlier material. His revisions need not have served to construct a single, synchronic world outlook on spirituality or ecclesiastical politics at any given time. While Peter probably had some kind of falling out with Reginald, he did not turn the compiled letters to Reginald into an exercise in character assassination. For example, he retained the statement of friendship that opens letter 30A; he clearly did not obsess over every stroke in his portrait of a sometime friend. The collection allows the relationship to unfold and to deteriorate before the reader's eyes by presenting a series of situations relevant to the careers of both men. These changes, taken together with Peter's possibly retrospective description of Thomas Becket as a *sanctus* in a letter allegedly written some time before his martyrdom, make it entirely likely that the dossier of Reginald letters were revised and compiled to accomplish something other than a simple narrative of Peter's career.[149]

Peter's other letters dating to the time of Reginald's episcopacy reveal a letter writer under considerable professional pressure. Letter 58 qualifies as a "business letter" due to its attention to a disputed matter within Reginald's diocesan administration. Peter complains vigorously that Reginald has uncanonically suspended his vice-archdeacon as a result of a bad debt of Peter's as well as the *malitia adulatorum*. Peter's message is brief and to the point, without classical allusion or a particular moral lesson. He quotes a canon of the recent Third Lateran Council in his defense, and refers also to past papal and conciliar decrees. In arguing for his rights over his vice-archdeacon Peter portrays himself as a defender of the honor of an archdeacon, whatever that may have been. He places himself squarely

149. See above, note 126.

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in the fray of disputes over privilege and procedure in writing to his bishop and friend.[150]

Given his past relationship with Reginald, the piece also has a personal angle. A few traces of sycophancy soften Peter's indignant tone, and he takes care to refer to his past service to the bishop and his help in securing his promotion. Peter invokes their intimacy, and thus endows the letter with the character of an account of a friendship betrayed:

> You have frequently read in the book of experience, what dangers and toils I have endured for you and how vigorously and effectively I worked for your promotion. If you recall our secret meetings, you know for certain that neither death nor the sword, nor any tumult should have separated me from your love. Nevertheless, though love be as strong as death [Song of Songs 8:6], a flattery stronger than love has estranged you from me.[151]

As he does many times in his letters, Peter inveighs against the influence of flatterers and its negative impact on his own career. In this case, a few barbed words seem to have nullified the benefit of his canvassing on Reginald's behalf, and so the friendship has entirely misfired. After noting the legal prescriptions against Reginald's actions, Peter offers to give up his English benefices and to leave the country to prove that ambition plays no role in his complaint.[152] Peter did not leave England, and did not renounce his English benefices, so this letter probably does not mark a definitive break between the two men so much as a professional disagreement. In his letter collection it illustrates the vicissitudes inherent in the life of the middle clergy through an episode of betrayal. Since it is well written but not adorned with a great number of scriptural allusions and citations, Peter may have seen its interest as primarily autobiographical rather than rhetorical.

Whisperers among Reginald's circle dogged Peter on more than one occasion. In Letter 92, which is discussed above in chapter 1, Peter complains about a *detractor* who has ridiculed Peter's writings and called him a *compilator.* The letter reads rather like a humanist exercise, not unlike some letters of John of Salisbury to Peter of Celle.[153] Peter defends the value of his writing by way of comparison to the Fathers who sprinkled

150. For Peter's alleged lack of proficiency at the law, see below, chapter 3.

151. *Ep.* 58, *PL* 207, 173.

152. ". . . paratus sum Angliam, et omnia beneficia Anglicana relinquere, atque omnes ambitionis nexus, qui utinam nec in me, nec in vobis regnaret, abrumpere": *Ep* 58, 174.

153. See Brooke, introduction to *The Letters of John of Salisbury,* 1:xlvii–xlviii; on the correspondence between John of Salisbury and Peter of Celle, see also Cotts, "Monks and Clerks in Search of the *Beata Schola:* Peter of Celle's Warning to John of Salisbury Reconsidered."

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their writings with scriptural allusions. Sometime in the early 1190s Peter revised the letter through the addition of a passage heavily dependent on John of Salisbury, but this is not an especially significant revision.[154] That Peter addressed this defense of his literary pursuits to Reginald may be significant in that it ties his ecclesiastical patron into his writing, and the high concentration of classical references give it the appearance of a discourse between learned friends. It is possible that Peter's pleas to Reginald fell on deaf ears, since Letters 61 and 85, discussed above, make it clear that Reginald did not place the highest value on the life of the mind. The archdeacon of Bath had entered into a professional and personal relationship that left him feeling besieged on all sides; he was caught with a lax-living patron whose sycophants persecuted him.

Though discernible tensions surface in the letters of rebuke and complaint, this part of the correspondence seems to be perfectly representative of a business relationship between two proud spirits. These letters combine sheepish groveling with indignation—both natural consequences of a professional relationship. Peter saw Reginald as a meddling superior, as a spiritual charge prone to gluttony, and yet as a potential ally; he wrote different sorts of letters depending on how Reginald appeared to him at a given time. The relationship may have deteriorated slightly, but Peter found enough of value in the correspondence to include a good sampling of it in his letter collection. Taken individually, these letters illustrate his professional dilemmas and allow us to consider specific aspects of a relationship between churchmen. Compiled and collected, however, they contribute to, if not a proper autobiography, then a clear representation of the vicissitudes of Peter's career in the Church, and of the importance of the author's revisions in effecting that representation.

Peter created a literary work that today does far more than retrospectively testify to his intellectual and political importance. It is a record of change and of anxiety that allowed for the introduction of new ideas and the expunging of old ones. Despite Peter's active role in changing the contents of the work, the general outlook of the collection changed little. At times Peter betrays an impulse toward writing autobiography, but he made no real attempt to record the events of his life in narrative fashion. Indeed, many past historians would have preferred it had Peter been more forthcoming with personal information. While not autobiographi-

154. *Ep.* 92, *PL* 207, 230. For the variant readings, see Higonnet, "Letters of Peter of Blois," 120–21.

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cal, the collection is certainly personal. The ecclesiastical standing of the addressees of his letters locates the letters in a specific social space: the world of the less-than-exalted secular clergy. He wrote to bishops and kings as well as archdeacons and canons, but, as I have argued above, the general makeup of Peter's addressees sets this collection apart from those of the great prelates. The letters provide an instructive complement to current research in ecclesiastical prosopography, for they are one of the few noncharter sources for the career of a cathedral canon and archiepiscopal servant. Recent studies of the Norman cathedral clergy (in whose number Peter can be counted) permit us to consider the origins and careers of lower ecclesiastical figures based on the evidence of charters, necrologies, and so on.[155] If every canon had left a letter collection like Peter's, we could write an entirely different kind of history, a history in which documentary evidence could be more accurately weighed against the reactions such canons felt toward events in their lives. Uninterested in providing all the details of his life, he wrote and collected his letters to represent his most pressing spiritual and professional concerns, and so conveys the anxieties of a cleric for whom nothing came easily except exemplary prose.

155. See Spear, *The Personnel of the Norman Cathedrals, 911–1204*.

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Catholic University of America Press

Chapter Title: The Formation of a Clerical Mind

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma
Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century
Book Author(s): John D. Cotts
Published by: Catholic University of America Press. (2009)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.8

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3 *The Formation of a Clerical Mind*

When Peter of Blois wrote his letters to Reginald de Bohun, he fashioned a relationship that was at once epistolary, professional, and intellectual. Although he and his ally interacted as fellow litterati who participated in the same clerical elite, their correspondence illustrates the iniquities that clerics had to confront and manipulate. It demonstrates that, as the "primary genre of literary expression for the school-trained,"[1] the twelfth-century letter also deployed school training amid the power negotiations of the learned. Reginald had probably trained at Paris and operated in similar circles of ecclesiastical politics, but he came from the well-connected de Bohun family, and so he was well on his way from curial service to becoming one of the leading bishops of the Angevin realm. Peter, on the other hand, the descendent of minor Breton nobles, depended upon his training and his usefulness as a writer and advocate for his livelihood, as well as for any advancement that came his way. He revealed his self-perception as an intellectual and a writer never so clearly as when rivals called his talents into question, and in his most defensive moments Peter made clear just what was at stake for a school-trained cleric making his way through a shifting political landscape. In particular, his letter to Reginald about his critics' accusations that he was merely a "compiler" demonstrates how literary method, patronage, and career advancement intertwined in the clerical life.

A rival in Reginald's household, clearly troubled by Peter's habit of adorning his writings with scriptural authorities and "examples from history," had labeled him a *compilator*. Peter, for his part, saw his work in a decidedly different light.

1. Van Engen, "Letters, Schools and Written Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," 110.

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Indeed, I have borrowed this method from the holy fathers, who in all their works frequently insert the words of the New and Old Testament, so that they might, through their skillful combination [*artifici junctura*], add strength and adornment to their pronouncements.[2]

The subsequent passages defend the quality of his writing as well and the value of the Fathers and of the ancients by quoting from Macrobius (twice), Terence, Horace (twice), and Pliny. Peter revels in this learned tour de force. "I am full of rhymes," he gloats before linking a Terentian quotation with one from Horace's satires.[3] With remarkable self-confidence Peter pleads guilty to a love of the classics and (quoting Seneca) compares his acquisition of ancient quotations with a bee gathering honey—a stock medieval allusion. "Whatever dogs may bark, whatever pigs may grunt, I will always emulate [*aemulabor*] the writings of the ancients!"[4] He concludes this first part of his defense by citing the view of the relationship between *antiqui* and *moderni* that John of Salisbury had famously attributed to Bernard of Chartres: "We, just like dwarves on the shoulders of giants, see further because of their support."[5] In admitting his penchant for borrowing, however, Peter does not humble himself but places himself in exalted company. Not only did Vergil borrow from Homer (and Peter mines Macrobius again for this detail) but

we know that the apostles took from the prophets, and the doctors from the apostles, and the doctors from other doctors, just as Jerome took from the books of Origen, Augustine and Bede from the books of Ambrose, and thus Ambrose from the writings of Cicero and Seneca, and also that Gregory took from the writings of Augustine and Jerome not only thoughts, but their very words, as if it were a loan [*in causam mutui acepisse*].[6]

A cleric who writes noble things in this way is neither a solitary genius nor a plagiarist, but a participant in a diachronic community of scholars. While Peter thus denied any wrongdoing in borrowing liberally from predecessors, he certainly seemed rather bothered by the term *compilator*. Isidore of Seville had in fact used the term in a negative connotation, referring to it as a "crime" of which Vergil had once been accused.[7] Some of his contem-

2. *Ep.* 92, *PL* 207, 289.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. "Nos, quasi nani super gigantum humeros sumus, quorum beneficio longius quam ipsi speculamur": Ibid. Cf. John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon* 3.4, ed. J. B. Hall and K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, CCCM 98 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991), 116. John's version reads: "Dicebat Bernardus Carnotensis nos esse quasi nanos gigantum umeris insidentes, ut possimus plura eis et remotiora videre."
6. Ibid.
7. *Etymologies* 10.44, in *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911).

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poraries must have also understood that writers could borrow in ways that were inappropriate, so Peter deflected the criticism by describing the practice of borrowing as a complex and pious methodology of prose composition. Moreover, in what might be a brilliantly defiant jab at the critics, he knowingly cribbed a line from John of Salisbury, perfectly illustrating that method. Stephen Ferruolo cited this passage to show that Peter pleaded "guilty as charged" to "plagiarism."[8] It is perhaps more instructive, however, to find in this passage a twelfth-century conception of literary production that allows for progress within the context of a growing tradition. This particular letter, written to a patron from a defensive posture, portrays Peter's intellectual world as not simply dependent on the classics but upon his own ability to manipulate and synthesize diverse sources. The so-called Scholastic program of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, at least according to traditional historiography, depended upon synthesis, and some modern historians have accused the prototypical early Scholastic thinker Peter Lombard of simply compiling. Even if some objected then and now, the methods of Peter Lombard and Peter of Blois worked.[9] The scribes who copied the hundreds of extant manuscripts of the latter's writings thought he had a point.

But Peter had more pressing concerns than the praise of Seneca, Augustine, and Gregory the Great. He sought to turn the accusations to his own advantage, and suggested that if some thought he was merely copying, it must have been because of the incredible speed with which he wrote. Just like Caesar, he dictated to three scribes while writing a fourth letter with his own hand (an example, originally from Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, which was featured in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, which he had read).[10] Anyone, including the archbishop of Canterbury and Reginald himself, could observe him at work writing volumes of ma-

8. Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, 168.

9. For modern critiques of the Lombard's originality and lack of stylistic flair, see Enrico Nobile, "Appunti sulla teologia dei *Qattro libri delle Sentenze* di Pier Lombardo," *Pier Lombardo* 4 (1960): 49–59; David E. Luscombe, *The School of Peter Abelard: The Influence of Abelard's Thought in the Early Scholastic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 263; and Jean LeClercq, "The Renewal of Theology," in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable, with Carol D. Lanham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 68–87. This historiographical tradition is neatly and critically explained in Marcia L. Colish, "Systematic Theology and Theological Renewal in the Twelfth Century," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 18 (1988): 135–56, here at 136–37.

10. "Vidit quandoque dominus Cantuariensis, et vos ipse cum eo, multique alii me de diversis materiis tribus dictare scriptoribus, et uniuscuiusque calamo festinanti satisfacere; meque quod de solo Julio Caesare scribitur, quartam epistolam dictare et scribere": *Ep* 92, 290. Cf. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. Clement C. I. Webb (Oxford, 1909), 2:41.

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terial. As he defended his reputation to a man who may have held his career in his hands, Peter also plied his trade.

There were other challenges to Peter's intellectual legitimacy. In the late 1190s, a regular canon somewhere in France or England had the effrontery to call Peter of Blois's learning and character into question, in a letter or tract that has not survived. Whoever this man was, and wherever he worked, his criticisms hit a nerve, in particular his dismissal of Peter's *Compendium in Job,* which Peter had dedicated to Henry II and which he regarded with considerable pride. The critic apparently struck with a multifaceted ad hominem attack that ridiculed not just Peter's writings but his career and his character, and Peter was especially hurt by charges that he had flattered the king and other magnates to advance his own position. Feeling that his writings could justify his life, he responded that his work contained no disingenuous flattery (although the modern historian certainly can detect more than hints of this), and he provided a list of the titles of his writings—a veritable curriculum vitae—as proof of his piety.[11] There is indeed a spiritual element in all of his writings, marked by a pervasive sense of pastoral duty. The writer is a pastor, and through writing, as through preaching, the pastor guides his flock.

The idea that secular learning, when approached properly, could show God's people the path to salvation passed from the patristic age to the twelfth century, but had always fought against a persistent strain of intellectual conservatism that distrusted pagan letters. St. Jerome's famous dream in which Christ rebuked him as a Ciceronian rather than a Christian, as well as Tertullian's epithet "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" reverberated down to Peter of Blois's time. Now, however, not only the figurative Athens but also the new schools at Paris and Bologna offered potentially dangerous alternatives to Jerusalem. The old debates continued within a newly emerging institutional framework. Tertullian's dream of sundering the two allegorical cities was accomplished more by the realities of early medieval politics and material life than by an endemic hatred of philosophy among Christian intellectuals. But the idea that the reading and contemplation of Scripture, the *lectio divina*, represented one's safest intellectual option, endured to face the challenge of new schools, many of them essentially protouniversities, during the High Middle Ages. Peter of Blois attended these new schools and had to defend himself from charges that he dabbled too freely in the secular sciences, and so found himself in the midst of a slowly developing intellectual revolution. R.W. Southern and Stephen

11. *Invectiva in depravatorem, PL* 207, 1115.

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Ferruolo have argued that Peter suffered from an old-fashioned academic outlook and hence found himself out of his element, caught between the rhetoric he knew and loved and the practical requirements of ecclesiastical and royal bureaucracy.[12] It is not clear, however, that Peter or his contemporaries would have considered him out of place. Debate between competing educational ideals pervades the entire history of the Western intellectual tradition, and it did not always lead to the displacement of an old paradigm by a new one. In this regard P. O. Kristeller's approach to Renaissance humanism and Scholasticism, which rejects the tendency to "interpret as a struggle for existence what in fact was merely a rivalry between competing forms of expression," is instructive.[13]

Northern France and England in the twelfth century possessed similarly complicated terrain marked by controversy and dichotomies, and several distinct rivalries could play out in the mind of an individual writer. Peter's works often suggest irreconcilable contradictions. Sometimes he lampooned law students, but sometimes he defended them. At any given point in his career he could adore or detest the "liberal sciences." These contradictions were as old as, and probably older than, Jerome's "Ciceronian dream," dyed into the fabric of the clerical thought-world. During Peter's lifetime the dilemma over the proper use of learning played itself out in debates over rhetoric, law, and what is commonly known as early Scholasticism. He experienced and reacted to far-reaching societal change, but in this respect he can be said to reflect his age rather than to lag behind it. He availed himself of several of the unprecedented number of academic choices that now appeared, and he was not above second-guessing himself. Through his learning, and his use of it throughout a long career, he demonstrated a synthesis of contradictions and an amazing versatility. Peter experienced the twelfth-century "Renaissance" not as an inexorable march toward order and system but as an anxious and sometimes experimental set of excursions through bewildering possibilities.

The Master in Jerusalem and Babylon

As a boy, Peter must have learned the elements of the *trivium* somewhere in the Loire region. If he was in fact born at Blois, he could have attended the renowned school at the local abbey of St. Laumer.[14] His letters

12. Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 110–11; Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, 165.

13. Paul Oskar Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism," in *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Streams* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 117.

14. This was suggested by Davy, *Un traité d'amour*, 15, and repeated in Türk, *Pierre de Blois: Ambitions et remords*, 15.

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suggest that he had early connections with the cathedral schools of both Chartres and Tours, but the precise nature of his association with those schools is not clear, and it is impossible to construct a clear *itinerarium* for his studies. He almost certainly studied with the famous master Bernard Silvestris, whose *De mundi universitate* Peter quoted in the opening letter of his letter collection, introducing the quotation with "as a certain master of mine so elegantly wrote." Bernard's work provided a source with which Peter would adorn his own writing repeatedly.[15] The rhetorical education he received there, including his immersion in the *artes dictandi*, stayed with him for the rest of his career.

Similarly, Chartres always occupied a special place in Peter's thought as the "house in which I received all the sacraments of the Christian faith" and as a cathedral where he sought a paying office.[16] Unfortunately, Peter reveals very little about the nature of his education there, or under which masters he studied, so he sheds little light on the historiographical problem of the "school of Chartres."[17] However, he corresponded with its bishop and several other members of the chapter, including another man named Peter of Blois, and he filled these letters with images of the learned cleric and allusions to the classics, many of which presumably come from florilegia or intermediaries such as Valerius Maximus, from whom John of Salisbury and other English ecclesiastical professionals often drew.[18]

He also referred to Tours as a place where he had composed "verses and trifles."[19] His reverence for Hildebert of Lavardin, who died as archbishop of Tours, and whose letters Peter had committed to memory, also indicates that the Loire valley was his intellectual proving ground. If Peter's later statements about his early education are credible, it can be supposed that by the time he undertook advanced study at Paris and then Bologna, he had a solid background in the *trivium* and significant exposure to the Latin classics, all of which led ultimately to the title of *magister*, "master," which implied that the holder had been granted license to take on students.[20] In many of the address clauses to Peter's letters, he

15. "sicut satis urbane scribit quidam magister meus": *Ep.* 1, *PL* 207, 1. The quotation has been identified by Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, 2:182–83, and Türk, *Pierre de Blois: Ambitions et remords*, 15.

16. *Ep.* 218, *PL* 207, 506–8.

17. See above, chapter 1, note 15.

18. See esp. *Ep.* 81 and its references to Solon, Carneades, Democritus, Crates, and Anaxagoras, taken from Valerius and Cicero. On Valerius Maximus in the twelfth century, see Janet Martin, "The Uses of Tradition: Gellius, Petronius, and John of Salisbury," *Viator* 10 (1979): 57–76.

19. See above, chapter 1, note 19.

20. See Phillipe Delhaye, "L'organisation scolaire au XIIe siècle," *Traditio* 5 (1947): 253–55.

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referred to himself as *magister;* more significantly, perhaps, he appears as "Master Peter of Blois" in many of the documents he attested and in the few chronicle sources that mention him.[21]

As early as the mid-1140s, Peter entered a course of study at Paris, and the city remained important to him throughout his career. In his old age, he recalled that he had seen Geoffrey of Peronne, the prior of Clairvaux who died in 1144 or 1147, *in scholis Parisius*. While based in England, he passed through the city on a diplomatic mission for Henry II and tried to buy some books of law which he had found for sale.[22] He had firsthand experience of the city and the processes through which learning was institutionalized there, but he also recognized the metaphorical place Paris had assumed in contemporary rhetoric. By the 1150s its schools had become synonymous in polemical literature with the new logic and theology that had been ascendant since the end of the previous century.[23] Contemporary discussions of the value of education, and what direction it ought to take, focused on what was going on there.

While Peter mentioned Tours only in passing as the place he dabbled in poetry, and Chartres primarily with a view to gaining a position there, he discussed Paris specifically as the home of the schools, to which he often referred through the military metaphor *castra scholaria*. In twelfth-century polemic, Paris served as the focus for numerous rhetorical dichotomies, many of them reverberations of earlier ones that had persisted since the early Christian centuries. It could be Jerusalem or Babylon, a place of divine enterprise or a cesspool of worldly ambition. Traditional metaphors for discussing learning and its new institutions thus delimited Peter's commentary on the educational options he pursued.

Although Paris had its defenders, moralists and satirists attacked the arrogance and ambition of the young men who studied there. Many observers, among them the poets John de Hauteville and Nigel de Longchamps, associated the schools with clerical pretension. The "Archmourner" of John's *Architrenius*, for example, visited the intellectual training ground of Paris and commiserated with its starving students before moving on to the Mount of Ambition and then to the Hill of Presumption.[24]

21. On the title of "master," see Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life*, 65–94.

22. "libri legum venales Parisius oblati sunt mihi": *Ep.* 71, *PL* 207, 219.

23. See Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*; Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*; and G. R. Evans, *Old Arts and New Theology: The Beginnings of Theology as an Academic Discipline* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

24. Johannes de Hauvilla, *Architrenius*, ed., Winthrop Wetherbee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 59–143; Nigellus de Longchamps, *Speculum stultorum*, ed. John H. Mo-

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Burnellus the Ass, the main character of Nigel's satire *Speculum stultorum*, spent time in Paris, passed through the medical school of Salerno, and made unrealized plans to go to Bologna in an attempt to carve out a successful career. To its defenders, on the other hand, Paris represented not just the institutionalization of students and their masters, but the realization of an ideal: the reform of clergy and people through education.[25]

Peter's letters leave little doubt of his opinion as to which eternal city—Jerusalem or Babylon—Paris prefigured. It was always for him more Paradise than Inferno. While Bernard of Clairvaux urged young men to flee Babylon and enter the monasteries to receive a truly spiritual education, Peter exhorted his acquaintance Jocelin de Bohun to save his nephews from the hell of worldly corruption by sending them *to* Paris. The alternative, he assures him, would be to let the youths associate with the "children of Babylon."[26] Even more interesting in this regard is Peter's advice to a young monk that he remain in the cloister rather than seek out the opportunity for travel afforded by a priorate, partly because of the time the monastic life would allow for study. For Peter, the cloister was morally equivalent to the schools:

> Indeed, in the cloister you can read, write, and teach. . . . I beseech you, love the cloister, and divest yourself of any desire of leaving; for my heart of hearts knows that if there is a heaven in this present life, it is either in the cloister or in the schools. Whatever is beyond these two, is filled with anxiety, restlessness, bitterness, fear, turbulence, and grief.[27]

The cloisters are valuable because of, not in spite of, their similarity to the schools. The regular canon Philip of Harvengt had made a similar comparison when he wrote that "the school ought to be called another cloister," but Peter made the comparison in the opposite direction, and did not see inevitable tension between the monastery and the schools.[28] Those who found a heavenly quality in the schools, including regular canons like Philip, recognized the relevance of the new schooling for the broader

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zley and Robert R. Raymo, University of California English Studies 18 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960).

25. Feruolo, *Origins of the University*, 5–8.

26. *Ep.* 51, *PL* 207, 157; for Bernard, see Le Goff, *Intellectuals*, 21.

27. "Sane in claustro potes legere, scribere, et docere. . . . Ama, quaeso, claustrum, et abscinde ab animo tuo desiderium exeundi; nam juxta sententiam cordis mei, si paradisus est in hac vita praesenti, vel in claustro est, vel in scholis. Quidquid enim extra haec duo est, plenum est anxietate, inquietudine, amaritudine, formidine, solicitudine et dolore": *Ep.* 13, *PL* 207, 42.

28. Philip of Harvengt, *Ep.* 18, *PL* 203, 158–59. On tension between the schools and the Cistercians, see Martha Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity*, 36–37.

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program of Church reform. A few decades after Philip, Peter could assume the spiritual value of the fledgling university, and reflect upon how closely the monastery could emulate it as a place of study. He expected training in an academic environment as a normal part of the clerical life.

Peter often presented Paris and its schools in abstract fashion, and used the city to stand for an ideal, as a place where men directed their energies to gaining divine wisdom. The schools and their masters do not come alive in his letters as they do in the first two books of John of Salisbury's *Metalogicon*.[29] Peter does not describe his teachers in any great detail, and says little about the great logicians of the 1130s and 1140s who so enthralled John. Instead, he most often refers to Paris as a place to study the *sacra pagina* and *lectio divina*.[30] "Theology," the "Queen of the Sciences" for which Paris was renowned, is itself a vague notion throughout his letters, though he assumes it is morally good and valuable. Twelfth-century authors used the term *theologia* with little precision, and it only gradually came to mean a specific academic discipline.[31] His attitude toward academic life recalls that of Hugh of St. Victor, whose ideal exegete was, in the words of Beryl Smalley, "a combination of Paris master and contemplative religious which only exceptional circumstances could produce."[32]

Paris appeared elsewhere in Peter's writings with a palpable sense of excitement, even when he tried to seem like an outsider to the academic scene. In the 1190s, responding to a friend who had queried him on a point of law, he wrote: "Let those who have questions ask them at Paris, where the intricate knots of difficult questions are resolved," and in his later years he discussed questions that he had grappled with in his youth.[33] Although later in life Peter argued that "scholastic labor leads not to salvation," he cannot be counted as a critic of Paris and its schools, and he never exposed those schools to the kind of brutal satirical treatment that John de Hauteville and Nigel de Longchamps did.[34] Paris and the life of the scholar in general remained ideals throughout his letters, ideals not tarnished by the career crises experienced by contemporary scholars.

After his initial training at Paris, Peter moved on to the famous law

29. John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, esp. 12–55.

30. On the monastic connotation of *lectio*, see Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 72–73. For the term's use in a strictly Scholastic setting, see Edouard Jeauneau, "Jean de Salisbury et la lecture de philosophes," in *The World of John of Salisbury*, 77–81.

31. G. R. Evans, *Old Arts and New Theology*, 29.

32. Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (New York: Philosophy Library, 1952), 105.

33. "Qui interrogant, interrogent Parisiis, ubi difficilium quaestionum nodi intricatissimi resolvuntur": *Ep.* 19, *PL* 207, 69.

34. "Scholasticus vero labor licet sit inefficax ad salutem": *Ep.* 139, *PL* 207, 415.

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school of Bologna. Bologna, however, could never replace Paris in his esteem. Like many young men who entered this branch of study in many eras, Peter was rebuked by his friends for his choice. When he defended himself in his letters, he revealed that he had thoroughly immersed himself in the Bolognese scene, but with a view to religious edification:

> You rebuke me, because in my sermons, which I once produced at the request of our schoolmates at Bologna, I incorporated words that had the scent of civil law. However, the civil law is holy and honorable, and approved by the sacred ordinances of the orthodox fathers. Indeed, I spoke to those trained in law in those aforementioned sermons about the terrible sentence of the harsh and final Judgment, and I declared to them that not by remedy of an appeal, nor by intercession of an entreaty, nor by a subsidiary action in a procedure, nor by restitution of benefice is it possible to proceed.[35]

Again Peter worked as a compiler, this time integrating his legal training into his preaching. It is not clear what Peter means by the term "sermons" (*exhortationes*), but it most likely denotes a sort of Scholastic lecture with a moral message.[36] When he addressed his classmates, he adorned his spiritual injunctions with legal terminology and so incurred the hostility of his colleagues, as did many *legisperiti* in the twelfth century.[37] At the end of the passage, Peter declares that he used the language of civil law (appeals, intercessions, and so on) to encourage his fellow scholars to look to the Last Judgment; he enlists the tools of Bologna for the purpose of saving souls.

Ultimately, however, Peter did not complete his course, even though he had managed to infuse it with a spiritual element. He apparently felt he had a choice to make, and he chose to give up law. In a letter to a friend, he described his defection from legal study, even as he recognized its utility as a branch of rhetoric. Once again Peter turned to a metaphor of educational Babylon, adorned with scriptural language:

> For the flawless law of God converts souls (Ps. 18.8), and I would count myself a sly advocate opposed to the divine law, if I did not offer frankincense

35. "Increpas me, quia in exhortationibus meis, quas rogatu conscholarium nostrorum quandoque Bononiae feci, verba posui, quas jus civile redolebant. Porro jus civile sanctum est et honestum, atque sacris orthodoxorum patrum consitutionibus approbatum. Loquebar equidem legisperitis in illis praedictis exhortationibus de terribili sententia districti et extremi judicii, et dicebam, quod nec appellationis remedio, nec supplicationis suffragio, nec actione in factum subsidiaria, nec aliquo restitutionis beneficio poterat attentari": *Ep.* 8, *PL* 207, 23.

36. The sermons referred to here are probably not the same *exhortationes* mentioned in the *Invectiva*, 1115.

37. See Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, 173–74; and Clanchy, "The *Moderni* in Education," 682–85.

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with a handful of fine flour, that is, with some small knowledge of theology. Indeed the secular law, with its glorious adornment of words, and toying with me through the urbanity of its charming speech, had snatched me up and intoxicated my mind, but the Prophet abhors the golden cup of Babylon [Jer. 51.7], by which he meant the charm of eloquence that builds Hell. Therefore, because my feet have not yet tarried in the law of God, I devote primarily my leisure time to reading the *Digests* and the *Codex*.[38]

Here Peter tells his reader what drew him to law: its eloquence and rhetorical style. He presents his defection from legal study as a flight from a seductive beauty whose proper place is in one's hours of leisure, and thus implies that he was not attracted by the technicalities of law but by its relation to rhetoric. Yet even this passion for legal turns of phrase withered before his sense of obligation to know the Scriptures.

In the 1190s Peter revised this piece by adding a passage that made the distinction between the two kinds of education more explicit and morally charged:

The practice of law among clerics is a matter fraught with danger. It lays claim to the whole man just for itself, in order to cheat him of out of control of his own property, place him at odds with spiritual matters, and tear him away from divine ones. . . . It is dangerous to devote oneself to human laws, so that the mind fasts for a moment from the contemplation of divine law. No one can at once declaim and pray, beseech and impeach, or exercise the ministry of Christ and the duty of an advocate, lest in his haste to do both he do neither well.[39]

All members of the clergy ought to avoid law as a moral evil with no value in a clerical life, or so it would seem. Peter, however, had not completely changed his mind. He always felt somewhat uncomfortable with the law,

38. "Lex enim Domini immaculata convertens animas; meque prevaricatorem legis divinae constituerem, nisi cum qualiquali theologiae notitia, nisi cum pugillo similae tus offerem. Lex equidem saecularis gloriosa supellectili verborum, lepidaeque orationis urbanitate lasciviens vehementer allexerat et inebriaverat mentem meam, sed abhorret Propheta aureum calicem Babylonis, ubi designatus est lepor eloquentiae aedificans ad Gehennam. Adhuc tamen, quia nondum dilitavi gressus meos in lege Domini, lectionis Codicis et Digestorum plerumque tempus vacationis impendo": *Ep.* 26A, Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 73–74. Peter makes a similar point about law in *Compendium in Job*, 188. The line "nisi cum pugillo similae tus offerem" recalls Leviticus 6:15: "Tollet sacerdos pugillum similæ, quæ conspersa est oleo, et totum tus, quod super similam positum est." See also Leviticus 2:2.

39. "Res plena discriminis est in clericis usus legum. Totum enim hominem adeo sibi vindicat, ut eum rei familiaris providentia fraudet, suspendat a spiritualibus, a divinis avellat. . . . Periculosum est ita legibus humanis impendere, ut mens per horulam a divinae legis meditatione iejunet. Nemo simul potest precari et orare, petere et postulare, exercere Christi ministerium et officium advocati, ne dum in utroque festinat neutrum bene peragat": *Ep* 26B, Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 77–78.

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as he made clear in the earlier letter, and always took pains to frame it in terms of the pastoral mission of the clergy. In the earlier version of this letter, Peter described his defection from the law as a rejection of one potential educational option in favor of another, but still employed the Babylon metaphor to emphasize what could be at stake spiritually. Now, he presents it as an escape from iniquity. Twelfth-century intellectuals, especially in their satirical literature, recognized these career options. Like the ass Burnellus, the anti-hero of Nigel de Longchamps's *Speculum stultorum*, Peter experimented with various options, changed his mind on the subject, and was acutely aware of the criticisms leveled at those who made overly secular choices. The revised version of his letter about Bologna, however, shows that his critique was not an unmitigated attack on lawyers but a lament for his times and a call for clerical reform. An advocate ought not to charge outrageous fees but instead plead on behalf of widows and orphans, as well as for the "utility of the republic and the liberty of the church."[40] The cleric cannot be tainted by greed or selfishness, or prosecute cases for their own sake. "I do not deny it is good to study law," he confesses, "but not for profit."[41] Peter's treatment of legal study, while leaving no doubt that theology is more virtuous, clearly depends on the intention of the individual concerned, and attacks the corruption of lawyers as much as the worldliness of laws themselves. While he seems to advocate an absolute dichotomy between profane law and sacred theology, in practice he leaves open the possibility that a pious advocate can perform a worthwhile service for the Church. Knowingly or not, Peter appropriated the intentionalist ethics of Abelard as a deeply practical guide for clerical professionalism.[42] In fact he appropriated a huge range of sources in this relatively short letter: he made liberal use of the *Digest*, quoting directly from it on two occasions, and seems to have borrowed his use of the term *res publica* from it.[43]

Peter's turn toward a more unambiguous critique of the legal pro-

40. "debuerat advocatus, quod gratis acceperat, gratis dare, advocare pro pupillo et vidua, pro utilitate rei publicae, pro ecclesiae libertate": Ibid., 79.

41. Ibid., 78.

42. On the influence of Abelard's *Ethica*, see Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life*, 278–81.

43. On the *Digest* and other Roman legal traditions in the twelfth century, as well as Abelard's earlier use of the term *res publica*, see D. E. Luscombe and G. R. Evans, "The Twelfth-Century Renaissance," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350–c.1450*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 310–16. On the relation of *libertas ecclesiae* to the Roman juridical tradition earlier in the Middle Ages, see Janet L. Nelson, "Kingship, Law and Liturgy in the Political Thought of Hincmar of Reims," *English Historical Review* 92 (1977): 241–79.

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fession has aroused scholarly suspicion that he rejected that profession because of his own incompetence. According to Southern, he "showed no aptitude for either branch of the law."[44] Several of Peter's letters address questions of canon law, but none in any great detail. For the most part he addresses questions of marriage and consanguinity, and quotes the *Digest*, Ivo of Chartres, and Burchard of Worms to some effect.[45] Stephan Kuttner and Eleanor Rathbone have agreed that Peter was no true canonist, remarking that Peter wrote about the law in the most general terms, and displayed little of the technical mastery of the material characteristic of contemporary decretists.[46] Peter, then, did not write subtle analyses of legal cases in his letters, and it may have been this aversion to intricate questions that drove him from Bologna to Paris.

But Peter has some claim to have been a lawyer, at least an ecclesiastical one, in a sense that was meaningful to his contemporaries. Two of the archbishops he advised at Canterbury, Richard of Dover and Baldwin of Ford, entrusted him, out of the large number of masters who frequented the archiepiscopal curia, with major legal cases. Moreover, the monks who opposed Peter and Baldwin on one of the cases regarded him as a dangerous opponent, and Gervase of Canterbury did not hesitate to call him a *legis peritus*.[47] While Kuttner describes the attribution of this title to Peter as unmerited, it had real meaning to his adversaries. After all, they feared him. There was without question a place for someone with Peter's approach to the law in the twelfth-century Church. He placed highest priority on rhetorical training, and put this priority into practice by quoting the *Digest* in much the same manner as he quoted the Scriptures, the Fathers, and the classics: to adorn his arguments.[48] Moreover, there is at least one contemporary portrait of an ideal lawyer that seems to match someone with Peter's abilities and passions. An *ordo judicarius* of the late twelfth century, the anonymous *Rhetorica ecclesiastica*, describes an ideal *orator* as "good man, experienced in speaking, who in private and public business employs a full and perfect eloquence." This same text also parallels Peter's ideas by tempering its preference for divine law with a recog-

44. Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 108.

45. As, for example, in his discussion of whether a woman who enters a monastery thinking her husband dead may be released from her vow: *Ep.* 19, *PL* 207, 69–71.

46. Stephen Kuttner and Eleanor Rathbone, "Anglo-Norman Canonists of the Twelfth Century," *Traditio* 7 (1949): 285–86.

47. "Misit autem archiepiscopus Petrum Blesensem ad Romanum pontificem, et alios legis peritos quos dolo vel malitia noverat esse perfectos": Gervase, *Chronica*, 356.

48. Kuttner and Rathbone, "Anglo-Norman Canonists," 286n, note that Peter quotes the canons of the Decretum either through paraphrase or by "inscription alone."

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nition of the need for secular ones.[49] Many professional decretists, such as Master Vacarius, shared Peter's habit of blending theology, rhetoric, and law, albeit with greater success.[50] When compared to canonists in the strict sense of the word Peter may come across as a dilettante (one recalls his promise to study law only in leisure hours), but his aversion to law cannot have stemmed solely from his own incompetence. For Peter, law was embedded in a much wider intellectual culture in which he played many roles.

Those roles may have even included that of physician, for Letter 43 suggests that Peter had absorbed at least some of the learning of the medical school at Salerno. In the late 1160s, he had convalesced from malaria in the care of the archbishop of that city, so he may have come into contact with students or teachers. Some years later, as Peter passed through the Loire region, a clerk came to him and asked him to visit a sick knight, and Peter made a house call. He described the illness he observed to another Peter, whom he addressed as *medicus*, sometime in the 1170s or 1180s. Urban T. Holmes and Frederick R. Wheedon characterized this letter as "a milestone in the history of medicine."[51] The letter is a clear description of the symptoms of malaria and an account of the treatment, complete with a reference to Hippocrates.[52] Holmes and Weedon went so far as to praise Peter's conformity to "the model of differential diagnosis which is used today."[53] Beyond this account of his attempt to practice medicine, however, Peter left no account of Salerno or its schools, and he never integrated medicine into his critique of vain learning.

Educational Programs: *Auctores*, Systems, and Syntheses

Because Peter blurred the line between institution and metaphor when he discussed the schools, his discourse on Paris and Bologna provides only the vaguest sense of his broader intellectual projects. He worked in several literary genres and his extant corpus repeatedly transcends institutional frameworks as well as modern historians' conventional rubrics of medieval learning. His letter collection disseminated his school learning to other masters, monks, kings, bishops, regular canons working in schools, courts,

49. *Rhetorica ecclesiastica*, ed. Ludwig Wahrmund, in *Quellen zur Geschichte des Romisch-Kanonischen Prozesses im Mittelalter* (Innsbruck, 1906), 2.4.3:9–11.

50. Peter Stein, "Vacarius and the Civil Law," in *Church and Government in the Middle Ages*, 135.

51. Holmes and Weedon, "Peter of Blois as a Physician," 253.

52. *Ep.* 43, *PL* 207, 126–28.

53. Holmes and Weedon, "Peter of Blois as a Physician," 255.

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and monastic foundations. Peter was a "master" in the most versatile sense of the word, not a professional theologian who worked to codify the patristic and earlier medieval inheritances and ultimately to reconcile them with an Aristotelian system.[54] Although he certainly partook of the systematic impulse that pervaded the Paris schools, he also borrowed liberally from monastic writings that depended more on what M.-D. Chenu called "the symbolist mentality."[55] And while he wrote with a flair that could rightly be termed "humanist" because of its classical allusions and his confidence in the abilities of mankind's intellect, he channeled his love of the classics into writings that were for anything but the sake of learning itself. Moreover, his writings betray a pervasive anxiety that no amount of confidence in his abilities could ever quite conquer. This anxiety was most often motivated by the presence of the new choices and dilemmas that went along with material change and cultural ferment. One thing Peter was not, however, was an intellectual reactionary who clung to what was comfortable. He was a consummate dabbler, as he suggested with his own admission that he freely borrowed from the writings of others. The intellectual world of Peter of Blois, as his letters sketch it, does not support traditional views of twelfth-century culture that rigidly divide his contemporaries into humanists, early Scholastics, symbolists, or monastic thinkers.

Even as permanent institutions took the place of schools that rose and fell with the reputations of their charismatic masters, Peter of Blois saw learning as an encounter between student and master, and this dialectic informed much of his later writing as well as his basic conception of the cleric's role at the royal court.[56] At one point he wrote the archdeacon of Nantes to propose courses of study for two nephews. One of the two youths had already shown flashes of brilliance in early adolescence *(pubertas)*, while the younger brother was new to the life of the mind, still in his boyhood *(pueritia)*. Peter immediately points out the dangers inherent in study, and warns the letter's recipient not to be too proud of his elder nephew.

> I hope for more from the erudition of that one who comes to me simple and unformed, than from that of the other boy, whose vein of genius has already hardened a bit, and has shaped itself as an effigy of another teacher.[57]

54. On the use of the term master for a theologian working in the schools, see M.-D. Chenu, "The Masters of the Theological 'Science,'" in *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century*, 270–309, and Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, esp. 1:134–97.

55. Chenu, "The Symbolist Mentality," in *Nature, Man, and Society*, 99–145.

56. See below, chapter 4.

57. *Ep.* 101, *PL* 207, 312.

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Although Peter rarely mentioned his own masters and often spoke of schools as institutions rather than as the homes of individual masters, in this letter the master assumes a powerful, charismatic role, described through the analogy of the sculptor.[58] The sculptor shapes his students through the science of letters, which necessarily is the foundation of any further study, and of any worthwhile career.

Peter then advocates a highly structured, progressive education based on reading the ancients and acquiring sound grammatical knowledge. He cautions the archdeacon from letting his elder nephew move too fast or shirking the most important aspects of learning:

> You claim that William is of a subtler vein and a sharper mind, because he has left behind the study of grammar and the authors to fly off to the cunning of logic, where he learns dialectic not in books, as is the custom, but in notes and summaries [*in schedulis et quadernis*]. Not in such things is the foundation of the science of letters! The subtlety that you praise is in fact harmful to many. . . . What profit is there in spending one's days in those things which will not profit anyone in a household, army, market, cloister, court, church, or anywhere else, but only in the schools?[59]

Peter, having already had some experience of the courtly life, saw the schools as a means to an end. In this respect the passage recalls the main thrust of John of Salisbury's attacks on the "Cornificians" in his *Metalogicon*, and is representative of a frequent twelfth-century reaction against excessive "subtlety" of thought.[60] Peter himself attacked the Cornificians in the letter that defended his habit of borrowing from the ancients. The subtle Cornificians quibbled over syllables and vain arguments while the true literati, represented by John and Peter, steeped themselves in the ancient learning and then went out into the world. Indeed, the term *subtilitas* appeared prominently in contemporary discussions of education, generally with a negative connotation, to describe school learning and occasionally professional, secularly involved training.[61] John of Salisbury, on whom so much of Peter's letter depends, occasionally admired the values embraced by "modern" thinkers, as evidenced in his praise for Bernard of Chartres and others, but with equal fervor inveighed against what he

58. C. Stephen Jaeger has argued that this kind of "charsimatic pedagogy" has its roots in early Christianity, especially as exemplified in the *De officiis ministrorum* of St. Jerome. See *The Envy of Angels*, 76–83.

59. *Ep.* 101, *PL* 207, 312.

60. John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, passim, but especially 1.1–1.5, ed. Keats-Rohan, 12–22.

61. For a discussion of the twelfth-century notion of pernicious *subtilitas*, see Clanchy, "*Moderni* in Education," 673–79.

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felt were pernicious trends in education. The contrast between subtle and useful, paired with the related dichotomy of modern and ancient, appears throughout contemporary literature.[62] Especially dangerous, as the above passage shows, was the habit of students plunging headlong into higher studies before mastering the *trivium*. This notion appears frequently in twelfth-century writers, such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Nigel de Longchamps, who also condemned those who studied dialectic or the professions before mastering the elementary sciences.[63]

Peter described the new studies in terms borrowed, occasionally verbatim, from John of Salisbury's *Policraticus:* "Before they are imbued with the elementary disciplines, they are taught to inquire about the period, the line . . . the substance and form of the voice, the essence of universals, the rising [of celestial spheres], the use and end of the virtues," and so on.[64] Over fifty years ago Philippe Delhaye compiled a line-by-line summary of the concordances between Peter's list and the similar one compiled by John, and branded Peter a shameless plagiarist. More recent scholars, however, have approached the passage with greater generosity.[65] Peter Dronke read the passage as irony and claimed that Peter merely "pretends" that such subjects were taught to youngsters, which they were not, simply to adorn his attack with a rhetorical flourish.[66] Peter, then, borrowed John's words not to pass them off as his own, but to make a point based on a conventional account of education. John's description of quibbling in education, intended in the *Policraticus* to supplement his argument for skepticism toward certain aspects of early Scholastic pedagogy, was common currency in the contemporary intellectual context, a

62. The classic study of attitudes toward ancient and moderns is Elisabeth Gössmann, *Antiqui und Moderni im Mittelalter: Eine geschichtliche Standortsbestimmung*, Veröffentlichungen des Grabmann-Institutes 23 (Munich: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1974); for the twelfth-century, see esp. 63–101.

63. On Bernard, see Evans, *Old Arts and New Theology*, 44; for Nigel, see his *Speculum*, 64–67.

64. The full list reads: "quidam antequam disciplinis elementaribus imbuantur, doceantur inquirere de puncto, de linea, de quantitate animae, de fato, de pronitate naturae, de casu et libero arbitrio, de materia et motu, de principiis corporum, de progressu multitudinis, et magnitudinis sectione, quid sit tempus, quid inane, quid locus, de eodem et de diverso, de diviso, et de dividuo et individuo, de substantia et forma vocis, de essentia universalium, de ortu, usuque et fine virtutum, de causis rerum, de refluxione oceani, de ortu Nili, de variis latentis naturae secretis, devariis figuriis causarum, quae in contractibus vel quasi contractibus, maleficiis, vel quasi maleficiis oriuntur, de primis rerum initiis, et aliis quampluribus, quae plenioris scientiae fundamentum, et eminentiores exigunt intellectus": *Ep.* 101, 312–13; cf. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. Clement C. I. Webb (Oxford, 1909), 2:98–99.

65. Delhaye, "Une témoignage frauduleux," 330–31.

66. Peter Dronke, "Peter of Blois," 199n.

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readily available catalogue of questions that Peter deployed ironically to point out the absurdity of subtlety for its own sake.

The rest of the letter and Peter's statements on education elsewhere in his collection, however, call into question Dronke's denial that the letter contains a "scholarly program."[67] Peter's insistence on controlled progress in education closely resembles Hugh of St. Victor's belief that each art needed to be fully mastered before others could be tackled, and there is no question that Hugh had a firm, if somewhat impractical, ideal for progression through one's studies.[68] Peter insisted that the great authors, the ones he learned in school, remained the sine qua non for all other pursuits. He did not absolutely discourage the study of logic or the *quadrivium* in general so much as stress the centrality of the liberal studies of grammar and rhetoric. John of Salisbury's approach provided him with a useful weapon, and he apparently saw no need to modify it greatly. The letter as it stands is both original and highly complex, projecting onto two ambitious youths larger debates on education and the role of learning among intellectuals.

Returning to Peter's stated purpose in this letter to an uncle, we come to the proper course of study for a boy, which begins with grammar, and grammar through the works of the "ancients": Donatus, Servius, Priscian, Isidore, Bede, and Cassiodorus.[69] From this solid foundation one can proceed to the writers that Peter himself studied as a boy and from whom he derived great profit. His primary influence, he claims, was Hildebert of Lavardin, whose letters he learned by heart as a boy. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Peter set up a literary genealogy for himself by praising an episcopal letter writer active in his homeland who also showed diverse literary interests. Although Peter could not have known Hildebert personally, he constructed a personal literary relationship with his fellow scholar of the Loire, since the archbishop of Tours is the centerpiece of Peter's account of his education and the only "modern" who appears in his literary pantheon. After praising Hildebert, Peter comes to more ancient authors who (allegedly) figured prominently in his youth, including "Trogus Pompeius, Josephus, Suetonius, Hegesippus, Quintus Curtius, Cornelius Tacitus, Titus Livius."[70] It is highly unlikely, of course,

67. Ibid.

68. Hugh of St. Victor, *Didiscalicon,* ed. C. H. Buttimer (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1939), esp. 52–54, 105–9; trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 86–87, 128–31.

69. *Ep.* 101, 313.

70. Ibid., 314.

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that Peter knew all of these authors from his own reading; he knew them through contemporary authors or through florilegia.[71] The list, as has been pointed out many times, is once again adapted from John of Salisbury, who named the same authors in book 8 of the *Policraticus*.[72] As Southern noted, Peter thus turned "rhetoric into autobiography," that is, he made his point about the ideal education by taking an already accepted group of authors and representing it as his own.[73] John's list, however, included two additional names, the fictional Serenus and Tranquillus; he invented two figures to round out his catalogue, perhaps as a learned jest. And Peter got the joke. He omitted the two fictional characters from his letter, leaving only the names that he might have encountered himself, either in florilegia or the considerable libraries at Canterbury.[74] Peter did not so much plagiarize as participate in a thriving culture of intellectuals with shared presumptions and reading knowledge, modifying elements of that culture to his needs. John was the leading light of a class of learned clerics who at least paid lip service to love of the classics as they depended on florilegia for quotations; Peter followed John's lead and played along.[75] We still ought to take the educational suggestions in the letter seriously, however, for Peter clearly places *scientia litteralis* above other kinds of learning, and shows this by juxtaposing the central aspects of his own early education with the fruitless pursuit of the *versutias logicae*.

After an orderly, progressive education, then, what is the learned cleric to do? Because he did not stay in high Scholastic circles for very long, but instead moved on to serve in various royal and archiepiscopal households, it would make sense if he tied his ideal of learning into his work as an advisor and administrator. This is exactly what Peter did in Letter 6, written in the 1170s or 1180s as a defense of himself and his Canterbury colleagues against accusations that they were essentially *curiales* engaged in secular business.[76] After showing that he and his fellow archiepiscopal servants were not worldly courtiers but learned advisors whose well-trained minds could solve all the realm's problems, Peter turns the tables

71. On the *florilegia* in use among Peter's contemporaries, see Anne J. Duggan, "Classical Quotations and Allusions in the Correspondence of Thomas Becket: An Investigation of Their Sources," *Viator* 32 (2001): 1–22.

72. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 8.18, ed. Webb., 2:364.

73. Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 118.

74. Peter's omission of the fictional names was apparently first noted in Martin, "The Uses of Tradition," 68. On the value of the libraries at Canterbury to John, see Martin, "John of Salisbury as a Classical Scholar," in *The World of John of Salisbury*, 180.

75. On Peter's use of John of Salisbury, see also the parallels listed by Jeannette Hargrave, "Studies on Peter of Blois" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1939), 137–42.

76. This letter will be discussed again, in a different context, below, in chapter 4.

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on his accuser, one Ralph of Beauvais. Peter portrays Ralph as a pedantic quibbler who, instead of performing useful holy service at Canterbury, stayed in the schools to argue over syllables and grammar. Conflating several different critiques of the secular clergy he constructs another variant on the Athens-Jerusalem dichotomy. "Tully, Priscian, Donatus, Lucan: These are your Gods!" he exclaims.[77] Peter had himself praised Priscian and Donatus in a nearly contemporary letter cited above. In order to support his defense of the Canterbury clerks, he chose an easy target: profane letters. A number of different, conventional critiques merge, including the attack on worldly involvement and the pedantic excesses of the new logic. Regardless of his praise for the ancients elsewhere, this passage does not necessarily expose Peter as a hypocrite. The attack on profane letters, thanks to Jerome, Tertullian, and others, was rhetorically a fair strategy. Peter again formulates an educational ethic that is fundamentally intentionalist: the clerks of an archbishop used their learning in pious ways and so performed valuable services that Scholastic pedants could not.

Life for scholars who served the Church was rarely so idyllic. One of them, a certain R. Blondus, had attached himself to Geoffrey, son of Henry II and in 1180 the bishop-elect of Lincoln, only to linger in the company of an unnamed abbot, where apparently he engaged in disputation. It fell to Peter to write Geoffrey's rebuke, which he filled with the language of scholarship, but only to call the clerk back to service in the world.

> Disputation is more powerful when it lies in the refutation and opposition of deeds [*contrarietate operum*], rather than of words. . . . What you added to your letters in praise of leisure, about Tibullus and the monks of Egypt, was the notion of an otiose man. For I called you to work, not to learned leisure![78]

The young master lost sight of his professional obligations, and lamely attempted to compare himself with the desert fathers. This, however, was no idle monk but a wandering scholar. Peter continues to point out that the clerk, having shaken off his obedience to Geoffrey, cannot find his way in the scholarly world.

> Now you determine to argue cases at Paris, then to go back to Bologna, then to proceed to Lincoln, then to delay at Oxford. In this determination is great con-

77. *Ep.* 6, *PL* 207, 18.

78. *Ep.* 62, *PL* 207, 185. See also *EEA 17: York 1189–1212*, ed. Marie Lovatt (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2004), xxxii–xxxiv, xcvii. The reference to Tibullus is to *Carm.* 1.

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fusion, where your mind burns for contrary desires, and you confound yourself at every turn.[79]

Like Burnellus the Ass, and not unlike Peter himself, young master R. found himself poised between educational options in the form of four centers of learning, only to face confusion and the hostility of certain superiors. Peter reminds the clerk about the benefices in Geoffrey's control before warning him not to cross the archbishop of Canterbury. Writing for a powerful magnate in the Church, he confronted an aspiring scholar with the realities of ecclesiastical politics.

These messy realities aside, however, Peter's program for learning, as he presented it to the archdeacon of Nantes, seems to have been entirely traditional. He certainly recognized the existence of new sciences, but the authors he praises would have been familiar and welcome to medieval teachers from earlier centuries. As for more advanced studies, Peter admired Paris and its schools, but where did he stand in relation to men like Gilbert of Poitiers and Peter Lombard, who could well have been in Paris when he was? Peter, like John of Salisbury, wrote no *summa*, and relatively few of his works would be described as truly "theological" in the academic sense. His one biblical commentary, *Compendium in Job*, belongs to the tradition of Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* and engaged in purely tropological exegesis, supposedly for the sake of Henry II's soul. It sheds more light on the reception of the Church Fathers than on twelfth-century exegetical practice.

Peter's professional responsibilities as described throughout his letter collection, and especially in the dedicatory letter to Henry II that claimed his letters "hung on another's judgment," may well have worked against the development of a systematic, stereotypically Scholastic method in his writings. In a letter written to Abbot Peter of Cîteaux in the 1190s he showed himself to be perfectly in tune with the symbolist mentality. Thanking the abbot for the gift of a cup fashioned from metal and wood, he proceeded to practice a kind of allegorical mode of exegesis on it, finding in the cup an image of Christian charity.

[In the cup] I see two metals melded into one; I see two woods rendered into a single vessel. To be sure, the metals and woods each could make one vessel on their own, each taken separately is sufficient. But when they have been combined, they give shape to a condition of true charity. For charity longs to be combined, and when it unites its neighbor to itself in an embrace of warm affection, this singleness of being eliminates every vexatious attack.[80]

79. Ibid.

80. "Duo ibi metalla video conflata in unum; duo ligna redacta in vasculum unum. Metalla

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Peter had clearly internalized the language of Cîteaux, perhaps because of his relationship with Baldwin of Ford, or perhaps because this spiritual imagery suffused the correspondence of Western Europe. John of Salisbury had earlier sent his friend, the abbot Peter of Celle, a silver and gold salt cellar and similarly interpreted its meaning: "You offer that salt to God in the refined silver of pure eloquence, and the golden images of the virtues shine forth for all beholders in the mirror of both word and deed."[81] Letters like these transgress the institutional boundaries that scholars sometimes use to confine intellectuals, and show monks and clerks operating in a shared thought world of symbol and allegory. Peter and John could participate in any number of traditions.[82]

On a few occasions, however, Peter followed the standard Scholastic practice marshalling authorities, more or less systematically, to arrive at a solution, usually within a legal discourse. He acknowledged his situation vis-à-vis the schools in a letter to one "R," a law student:

> Recently in a scholastic debate [*in conflictu scholastico*], certain questions, just as you claim, were brought out into the open and have left your mind in doubt. You propose these questions to me and eagerly seek their solution. However, you are in the schools and I in the camps [*verumtamen cum sis in scholis, ego autem in castris*], and although you have already spent two years with your laws and decretals, I fear lest you do this tentatively, so that you might properly understand me, in my simplicity.[83]

The question centered on the rather ubiquitous topic of marriage law: a woman had entered a convent and taken the veil thinking her husband had died abroad.[84] If he suddenly returns alive, is she free from his authority? Moreover, if she were restored to her husband and he then died, would she then be held to her vow of continence? Peter proceeds confidently and deliberately to explain that the vow held no effect since it was made without her husband's permission, citing various synods, the letters of two popes, and Augustine, Jerome, and Ambrose. However, referring to another council, Peter notes that if the husband wished her to keep

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per se, et ligna seorsim, vas unum faciunt, separata singula sibi sufficerent; combinata vero statum verae charitatis informant. Charitas combinari desiderat, et proximum sibi uniens in amoris amplxum omnem calumniam singularitas evacuat": *Ep.* 63, *PL* 207, 186.

81. "Sed et illud Deo offertis examinatio eloquii casti argento, et aureae virtutum imagines in speculo verbi et operas renident intuentibus eosque provocant": *The Letters of John of Salisbury* ed. Millor and Brooke, 1:59.

82. See Cotts, "Monks and Clerks in Search of the *Beata Schola*," esp. 270–73.

83. *Ep.* 19, *PL* 207, 69.

84. For the problem of remarriage in general, as well as cases similar to this one, see James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 199–203, 243–45, 288–96.

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her vow she must do so. Peter's method and language display obvious familiarity with Scholastic disputation, as when he pairs objection and response: *Quod si objicias … respondeo.* Here the response refers to a letter of Pope Alexander II included in the *Decretum* of Gratian.[85] Peter concludes his answer by inviting the student to solicit other opinions and to share them. "If anything more elegant comes to you from elsewhere, do not begrudge me, for just as a student learns from a master, so I am ready to be taught by a student."[86] He bids farewell with a description of his book *De praestigiis fortunae,* now lost, which had apparently offended someone.

Peter, then, could talk the talk of contemporary disputation, but often he made a point of placing himself absolutely outside the scholarly world, in the *castra*.[87] Until relatively late in his career, he contributed little in the way of a Scholastic discussion of theological problems. He was a product of the schools but not a working theologian. In addition, if Peter is measured by the usual standards applied to theological masters, he will be found lacking some of the expected traits. For instance, Peter shows little concern with the logic of Aristotle with which so many of his contemporaries busied themselves. His Aristotle makes four appearances in the main letter collection, and seems to be the Aristotle of Chartres Cathedral's Royal Portal: a symbol of dialectic (sculpted during Peter's lifetime).[88] On occasion, especially in his sermons, Peter even used him as a caricature of vain learning.[89] He sounds positive notes in three letters that mention Aristotle's instruction of Alexander the Great, but makes no reference to Aristotelian doctrine. Only once in the main collection does he quote Aristotle directly, and, perhaps predictably, he does so in a letter to John of Salisbury. Dealing with the tricky issue of whether John should promote his nephews to ecclesiastical benefices—John clearly had been charged, through whispers, with nepotism—Peter makes a case based on natural merit. "You recall that Aristotle said that 'all that is what it is by nature, is better than that which is not what it is by nature.'"[90]

85. *Decretum* 2.33.5.2, in Emil Friedberg, ed., *Corpus Iuris Canonici,* 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1879), 1:1250–51.

86. *Ep.* 19, 74.

87. For *castra* as a term denoting clerical service in the world, see Philippe Buc, *L'ambïguité du livre: Prince, pouvoir, et peuple dans les commentaires de la Bible au Moyen Age* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1994), 55–56 and notes.

88. See Adolf Katzenellenbogen, *The Sculptural Programs of Chartres Cathedral: Christ-Mary-Ecclesia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964), 15–22.

89. See especially Sermon 29, *PL* 207, 648–50.

90. "Aristotelem dixisse recolitis, quia omne quod natura tale est, magis tale est eo quod

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Nature obligated John to take care of an honorable but poor relative, and Peter found in Aristotle a convenient authority.

Later in his career, however, in the early 1200s when Peter spent most of his time in London, he returned to his Parisian training and sprinkled allusions to the *Categories*, *De sophisticis elenchis*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the *Topics* throughout six letters, mentioning Aristotle by name twice. In a letter instructing the abbot of Coggeshall on the Last Judgment, the afterlife, and the nature of the resurrected body, Peter struck a posture that seems transparently Scholastic:

> It seems to some that the substance of the deceased body is not resurrected in the same way. Will the other properties of the natural body, when glorified, be what they were before? For the difference makes it something else; therefore, after the resurrection it will be another body. We say that the genus or species is predicated in the "quid," but the difference is predicated in the "quale"; accordingly, it can be made another body on account of the genus or species but not on account of the difference, although Aristotle in the *Topics* said that this "mortal" difference in the division of man is not substantial, because what is mortal can be made immortal.[91]

In content and form this passage echoes from the rented halls of twelfth-century Paris, and Simon of Tournai placed a similar question in his *Disputationes*.[92] The problem of the resurrected body's substance challenged Scholastic thinkers to import Aristotelian ideas in highly original ways, and thus played a major role in the reception of Aristotle by Western Europe.[93]

This and other later letters illuminate Peter's exposure to the Scholastic method more clearly than anything else in his collection. Sometime

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non natura tale": *Ep.* 70, *PL* 207, 218. Cf. Aristotle, *Topics*, III.1. Peter seems to be paraphrasing the Boethian translation of Aristotle: "Et quod natura est [eligendum] eo quod non natura." See *Aristoteles Latinus V: Topica*, ed. L. Minio Paluello (Brussels and Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1969), 51.

91. "Quibusdame autem visum est quod substantia mortui corpus eadem non resurget. Eruntne alie proprietates corporis naturalis glorificati quam corporis prius mortui? Differentia vero facit aliud, ergo post resurrectionem aliud corpus erit. Dicimus quod genus sive species predicatur in 'quid,' differentia vero in 'quale': proinde propter genus sive speciem potest fieri aliud sed non propter differentiam, quamvis Aristoteles in *Topicis* dixerit quod hec differentia 'mortale' in divsione hominis non est substantialis, quia mortale est potest fieri immortale": *Later Letters*, no. 29, p. 153.

92. See Revell's note at *Later Letters*, no. 29, p. 153.

93. See Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 115–225, esp. 134–35, 231–34; Nicholas Vincent, *The Holy Blood: King Henry III and the Westminster Blood Relic* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 100–101, 126–30.

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in the last decade of his life he wrote on a series of *quaestiones* he had compiled in his youth regarding the nature of divine punishment, which amounts to a critique of certain theological issues surrounding indulgences.[94] Without providing an address clause, Peter begins with a quotation from Job on sin and adds: "From this it seems that [*videtur quod*] his penalty [*pena*] was greater than the fault [*culpa*] which preceded it, and that God can punish according to desert or beyond it."[95] The proper relationship between *pena* and *culpa* formed the crux of contemporary discussions about the assigning of penances, and similarly underlay much of the debate over indulgences.[96]

Peter follows this proposition with quotations from Genesis, the Gospel of Matthew, and Augustine's *Ennarationes in Psalmos*. Then, however, he adds a "but on the other hand" *(quod autem)* and returns to the quotation from Job, adding that "it must be understood to be about a temporal penalty which is more a matter of examination rather than damnation." After another quotation from Job he declares "we say [*dicimus*] that the penalty of damnation is always beyond what is deserved, not the penalty of examination." He then comments on a series of *auctoritates*, introducing each with an *item*, before concluding with a discussion of the meaning of terms such as "potest."[97] Peter adds a brief coda to the letter, which again was really a short treatise addressed (apparently) to no one in particular: "I send you these things from the recollection of old questions [*veterum quaestionum*] that I collected in my adolescence or youth, and God willing I will respond to you more thoroughly when time allows."[98] Peter here demonstrates not only the argumentative techniques of the Scholastics, but also competence using the technical language of penance to debate problems of practical theology. So while the letter may be a vaguely nostalgic retread of old lecture notes, as Southern suggested, it could well have meant considerably more to Peter, for penance had great personal resonance with him (as we shall see). Peter was a great penitent himself at times, and at the end of his life took the pastoral responsibilities of an ordained priest quite seriously.

This kind of theological speculation pervades the later letters. His letter to the abbot of Coggeshall discussed twenty-two distinct questions

94. On Peter's views on indulgences, see Nicholas Vincent, "Some Pardoners' Tales: The Earliest English Indulgences," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 12 (2002): 35.

95. *Later Letters*, no. 37, p. 179.

96. Vincent, "Some Pardoners' Tales," esp. 27–37.

97. *Later Letters*, no. 37, p. 180.

98. Ibid., 183.

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on the Last Judgment and went over material also discussed by a host of mainstream early Scholastics: Peter Lombard, Odo of Ourscamp, Peter of Poitiers, Stephen Langton, Robert of Melun, Simon of Tournai. He sent the prior of Ramsey a series of problems raised by the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11), and for Robert de Meung, treasurer of St. Martin's at Tours, he expounded on original sin.[99] He reproved another master, possibly Alexander Nequam, on the return of sin in a highly argumentative letter that directly quoted Hugh of St. Victor.[100] The sheer number of these disputatious letters suggests that Peter had taken good notes at Paris and that he had the time later in his career to go over them. He generally presents his *quaestiones* as responses to requests, so he may have been regarded as a member of St. Paul's who could be relied on for insight into a great variety of subjects.

The Introspective Cleric between Sacred and Profane Letters

Throughout all these pursuits, Peter wrestled with his position in the world and the problem of what to do with his talents. He loved wisdom, but his immersion in *auctores* always emphasized practicality. The clerks of Canterbury benefited the *res publica* because they solved problems, not because they quoted Cicero. True humanistic *otium* never appealed to Peter. Indeed, Rodney Thomson has persuasively argued that twelfth-century monks pursued that sort of life with greater ease than did clerks like Peter and John of Salisbury. Peter and John had not "the luxury of reading the *auctores* for their own sake."[101] Moreover, in the *saeculum*, choices were not easy. To navigate between professional options meant to keep eternal dichotomies in mind at all times. While the polarities of thought and action surfaced throughout Peter's career, in the 1190s the problem seemed more pressing. During that decade he wrote to a clerk of the royal *curia* who was contemplating learning civil law and presented the clerk's dilemma in stark and uncompromising terms—there is no middle way in Peter's opening sentence:

> You are divided, and your heart is pulled in opposite directions. Seized by a wavering fluctuation, you hesitate as to whether you will turn to the knowledge of the laws or the pursuit of the sacred page. In this conundrum your intent

99. *Latter Letters,* no. 39, pp. 186–87, and no. 14, pp. 217–21.

100. *Later Letters,* no. 70, pp. 304–6. On Alexander as recipient, see Revell's notes.

101. Rodney Thomson, "John of Salisbury and William of Malmesbury: Currents in Twelfth-Century Humanism," in *The World of John of Salisbury,* 125.

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determines the ends [*In hac perplexitate distinguit finis intentio*]. You tend toward one on account of the vanity of this world, toward the other on account of the truth of God. Therefore emulate the counsel of the apostle [Rom. 12] with better grace, and in your heart let the dragon of Moses devour the dragon of Pharaoh [Exod. 7], that is, let the knowledge of truth devour the knowledge of vanity.[102]

The moral dichotomy here is absolute, as his recipient does not receive the option of working *pro utilitate reipublicae*. Peter continues with a long-winded assertion of the superiority of scriptural wisdom, given by God, over secular law which was "in large part instituted by gentiles."[103] In the midst of his exhortation to scriptural study Peter returns to the notion that law and secular study in general is opposed to the good Christian life. But intentionalist ethics still apply: Peter emphasizes intentionality, reflecting contemporary discussions of sin, penitence, and satisfaction. Man studies civil law because of either place seeking or ambition, and a clerk ought instead to "rise up in the law that is suited to your order and your profession."[104] After a digression on the mystery of the Eucharist he arrives at an extreme form of the argument: "Faith understands though grace what reason cannot grasp by itself."[105] The clerk is urged to be a minister of the sacraments, and to advance from his current status of a clerk in deacon's orders to the full sacerdotal dignity. By the end of the letter, legal training is not only presented as a type of pagan vanity but as a synecdoche for the active, courtly life that he inveighed against in other letters.[106] Peter's clerical imagination enmeshes the law in a larger group of activities inconsistent with clerical order, and what began as a critique of legal education thus becomes an affirmation of the mysterious nature of the sacraments and an exhortation to drop everything and take on priestly orders. Participation in the sacramental culture of the fully ordained priesthood might help solve the dilemma of a divided soul.

Peter always found ways to project his moral anxieties onto the addressees in his letters, and he did so nowhere so spectacularly as when he wrote to someone who apparently shared his name. By the end of his career he had written and inserted into his collection two letters written to a "Master Peter of Blois." The earlier of the two pieces, Letter 77, appears

102. *Ep.* 140, *PL* 207, 416.

103. Ibid., 417.

104. "Lege ergo quod ordini, quod professioni tuae conveniat . . . diligens et devotas assurgas": Ibid., 416–17.

105. "Apprehendit fides per gratiam, quod non potuit ratio capere per seipsum": Ibid., 421.

106. See below, chapter 4.

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in almost every manuscript containing Peter's letter collection, while the second appears prior to it in just the manuscripts containing copies of the later issues of the collection. Peter thus placed two letters to the same recipient next to each other in reverse chronological order, but endowed them with radically different tones and morals. In both he delves into the place of the secular clergy in the world and their scholarly relationship to the classics. They seem, however, to make fatally irreconcilable arguments.

Letter 77, datable to 1182–1184, congratulates this second Peter on their shared name and shared glory, and praises their respective literary endeavors, while the later piece, *Ep.* 76, rebukes him for his love of the classics, obsession with secular poetry, and lack of interest in studying the Bible. Why did Peter backpedal so severely over the course of a decade? It is possible that he did not backpedal so much as express something that he had felt all along.

The early letter displays the smug confidence of a self-important intellectual engaging in literary name-dropping and self-flattery with a close colleague:

> But if a man less busy or less famous should bear our name, he would need to pay back as much honor as he took away from our common titles. Now, however, whatever praise I add to our common name through the acquisition of incomes and intimacy with magnates, by popular adoration, or by my writings, you yourself have enhanced by the same accomplishments or, perhaps, by more elegant means. . . . Our writings, which are diffused and made known everywhere, cannot be destroyed by flood, fire, ruin, or any worldly event. Writings alone can grant eternal life to mortals through undying fame, and they do not allow age to creep up on the deeds of the ancients, which instead they hand down to posterity.[107]

To justify his confidence in their literary pursuits, Peter provides a string of classical examples. Seneca immortalized the otherwise obscure Lucilius, and Lucan and Vergil did greater honor to Caesar than all the wealth he plundered. In fact, writers like the two Peters do nothing less than hold the future of the princes of the earth in their hands.[108] This letter, remarkable in Peter's corpus for its paucity of biblical allusions, glorifies the humanist endeavor for its own sake. In the middle third of the piece, the self-congratulatory tone gives way to a warning about the tendency of writers to flatter magnates and seek preferment, and points to the dan-

107. *Ep.* 77, *PL* 207, 238.
108. Ibid.

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gers of learned court culture. He concludes with a discussion of the lost tract *De praestigiis fortunae*, which he claims to have written to edify and glorify the king, and which he now offers for correction. Nowhere does Peter more clearly articulate his sense that he (and his recipient) belong to an elite group of intellectuals who not only rub shoulders with the great and powerful but also look to the salvation of their readers. This is the "medieval humanism" of Haskins and Southern: confident, steeped in the classics, and devoted to the Christian common good.

The preceding letter in the collection, in all probability written some ten years later, shatters these certainties.[109] Now Peter attacks his namesake for the very love of letters that he had glorified in *Ep.* 77, and chides him for prioritizing the classics over the Bible. Now he adopts not a triumphal but a dark, brooding tone that insists on immediate dangers to the recipient's soul, and urges this other Peter to get his priorities in line before it is too late. Rather than praise the master for his learning and literary skill, Peter condemns his worldliness:

> I am aggrieved, because I must speak more harshly than I ought or am accustomed to; for which reason my very words are filled with grief. Indeed, scholarly knowledge had elevated you to the highest titles of eminence, and although you ought to have been for others a model of virtues and a mirror of honor, through scurrilous trifles and fictional inventions of the gentiles you made yourself a trap for the ruin of many. Why should you, you who ought to be an organ of truth, concern yourself with vanities and false, silly things, or the fabled loves of the pagan gods? . . . And what foolishness is this, to sing fables of Hercules and Jove and to turn away from God, who is the way, the truth and the light [John 14]?[110]

Again and again Peter returns to the idea that secular writings (especially poetry) have no enduring value, and are essentially useless. Peter here supplies the slough of biblical quotations so markedly absent from the earlier piece, and he often plods redundantly through the same scriptural territory. His namesake was probably no more or less a target for this kind of invective in the 1190s than he had been in 1180s, so why has the letter writer sharpened his rhetorical darts at this stage? This sort of blatant self-contradiction requires sensitive analysis. The fundamental ambiguities of the learned cleric reverberate throughout his life and letters, and demand that close attention to the textual tradition of the letter collection.

109. For the rationale behind the dating of the later compilations of Peter's letters, see the appendix, below.

110. *Ep.* 76, *PL* 207, 232.

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As noted above, this darker letter, so critical of secular learning, appeared some ten years later than the initial letter of congratulation to the other Peter, but it did not replace the earlier letter in the collection. Instead, it assumed a position next to it, allowing the reader to consider both approaches to the problem. That the interpretation of these letters has crucial implications for our understanding of Peter as a cleric and writer has been noted by several scholars, including Reto Bezzola, Peter Dronke, and R.W. Southern, though considerable disagreement remains as to how this evidence ought to be interpreted.

One appealing solution to the problem rests primarily on an investigation of the twelfth-century trend toward greater introspection. In 1963, Bezzola suggested that the two pieces represent an elaborate literary artifice, that the Peter of Blois to whom these letters are addressed was in fact the same person as the letter writer, and that together the pair represent the conflicting attitudes of a single personality attempting to reconcile his love of letters with his spiritual obligations.[111] The pair of letters thus enact a highly self-conscious exercise in self-examination comparable to Petrarch's invention of a fictional correspondent, Augustinus, in his *Secretum*. This attractive and intriguing argument both solves the mystery of the identity of the second Peter of Blois, while offering a sensitive accounting for the letter writer's tendency to self-contradiction. In 1976, Peter Dronke adopted Bezzola's argument and used it as the basis for a carefully argued interpretation of Peter of Blois's career and writings, especially his seldom-discussed poetry. The harsh tone of the later letter resulted in part from Peter's anxiety about his own career as a poet, during which he had dabbled in secular verses about love, perhaps the *versus et ludicri* that Peter wrote as a youth at Tours. After considerations of what he calls the various "diptychs" of letters in Peter's corpus that seem to advance irreconcilable opinions, and a debate poem of Peter's on the value of court life, Dronke argued that Peter, and other writers of debate poetry, show us "all the tensions and doubts, all the worldly and unworldly aspirations," of contemporary court writers.[112] Peter of Blois, then, far from being a shameless hypocrite, had, more than most medieval authors, a "searching insight . . . into the nature of hypocrisy."[113] Tensions and contradiction came with the territory of a court poet. Peter thrived on the genre of the debate poem, and left two such poems to posterity.[114]

111. Bezzola, *Les origines*, 39–44.
112. Dronke, "Peter of Blois and Poetry at the Court of Henry II," 215.
113. Ibid., 198.
114. They are *Quod amicus suggerit* and *Felix ille locus*, in *Petri Blesensis Carmina*, 263–77.

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Dronke and Bezzola, however, wrote as literary critics, rather than as historians, and the historian Southern was reluctant to let the addressee of the letters disappear into the textual abyss as a mere invention. In 1992 he responded by providing documentary and literary evidence for a second Peter of Blois. Southern's primary concern was to establish that Peter of Blois the letter writer was not the same person as the Peter of Blois who wrote most of the poems that Dronke edited as an appendix to his article, and that therefore Dronke's arguments about Peter's attitudes toward love poetry exceeded what could be safely claimed based on his authentic writings. Southern identified Peter's recipient with a "Petrus Blesensis" known to have been archdeacon of Dreux, a fellow canon of the letter writer at Chartres who also wrote a well-known legal treatise.[115] Southern's argument based on the documentary evidence is persuasive, and his claims about the manuscript tradition of the poems published by Dronke suggest that the latter may have made unwarranted textual attributions. Nonetheless, as an interpretation of Peter's personality, Dronke's essay remains useful, and Southern acknowledged that the central point about the introspective nature of Peter's writings is absolutely correct. The poem on which he made his most convincing analysis of Peter's situation at court, the debate poem *Quod amicus suggerit* on clerical court service, is generally agreed (even by Southern) to be by Peter the letter writer, and he offers useful insights into the nature of Peter's "plagiarism."[116]

The editor of Peter's poetry, C. Wollin, acknowledged that the love poems attributed to Peter come from a different manuscript tradition than the definitely authentic ones, but suggested that it is impossible to attribute those poems beyond doubt to the archdeacon of Dreux. Moreover, he pointed out that the similarities between the poems that are surely attributed to the letter writer and those that Southern attributed to the archdeacon of Dreux are so marked that Bezzola's argument needs to be considered anew.[117] Despite the existence of an actual "second" Peter of Blois, Peter's presentation of their identical names as a theme in Letter 77 demands that the letters be read with the notion of a *speculum* in mind. Peter consciously and emphatically introduces the idea of a self-examination and even self-doubt. This pair of letters is simply a focal point, and a very self-conscious one, for the conflict between courtly and

115. Southern, "The Necessity for Two Peters of Blois," 109–12.

116. This poem is printed in *Petri Blesensis Carmina*, 265–74.

117. C. Wollin, introduction to *Petri Blesensis Carmina*, 15–20. See also Türk, *Pierre de Blois: Ambitions et remords*, 22–25.

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clerical, profane and sacred, that exists side by side throughout the letter collection. That the darker, more condemnatory letter appeared later in his life confirms that Peter's attitudes drifted toward unambiguous embrace of strictly spiritual attitudes. But he left the debate open by including letters with a different viewpoint in his collection.

There is yet another angle from which to approach the dilemma of Letters 76 and 77, and this returns the discussion to the overweening and threatening issues of power and patronage with which this chapter began. For Chartres served as the focal point for many of Peter's intellectual and professional ambitions. The presence of two letters to the eponymous Chartres canon over a ten-year period suggests a continuing interest in the chapter on Peter's part. Letters that he wrote to John of Salisbury after the latter became bishop there in 1176 confirm this, and of special significance are two that concerned John's promotion. The first, Letter 114, compliments the new bishop on his success and thanks him for looking after the "clergy of Blois," who had been "scattered across the earth." In addition, Peter is grateful that John has looked after individual clerics and in particular that he

> consecrated the first fruits [*primitias beneficiorum*] of [John's] benefices on that one, whom I consider another me, who carries me in his spirit, appearance, name, cognomen, and stature. That one, according to the requirements of his merits, is worthy of being infused with the oil of a fuller grace [Song of Songs 5:13]. Your hands distilled the first myrrh, and I hope it will happen that they will overflow with the balm of an even more fruitful grace. . . . You will give to your voice the voice of virtue, and with you it will not be "it is so," then, "it is not."[118]

More than three hundred years ago Goussainville argued (in a note printed in the *PL*) that the recipient of John's good graces was the same man sharing Peter's name to whom Letters 76 and 77 were addressed. Dronke rejected this theory on the grounds that John would have been "familiar with his *alter ego* device," and that the phrase *primitias beneficiorum* "does not necessarily, and in fact cannot, refer to a post at Chartres."[119] The idea that Peter was merely playing a literary game for John is another attractive theory, particularly given John's own well-known penchant for writing in an obscure manner transparent only to his intimates.[120] The documentary evidence unearthed by Southern, proving that there was

118. *Ep.* 114, *PL* 207, 342.
119. Dronke, "Peter of Blois," 197.
120. Brooke, introduction to *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, 1:xlvii.

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another Peter of Blois at Chartres, however, suggests that Peter may have mixed invention and reality quite intricately here, and this kind of mixing is the essence of Peter's epistolary program. The man described here fits the description in Letter 77 of a learned cleric at Chartres, and is consistent with Southern's theory. However, Peter's explicit use of the term "another me," and the fact that this man was Peter's twin in every important respect almost requires interpreting this other cleric, real though he may be, as a literary device, a mirror of Peter. Perhaps John was supposed to draw the logical conclusion that if someone almost identical to the letter writer received his favor, then Peter himself ought to receive it as well. This "other me" refers to a real person, but has become Peter's alter ego in the context of Peter's attempt to return to Chartres. That Peter is trying to secure a position actually supports Dronke's idea that Peter is talking about himself, for he has pinned his hopes for his own advancement on the example set by another.

Another letter of congratulation Peter wrote to John further compounds the problem. It occurs in only one manuscript, one that contains other letters known to be spurious, but E. S. Cohn's argument for the letter's authenticity is convincing.[121] What is likely is that Peter did not circulate this letter with the main collection, and its survival may even be accidental. Content and style clearly point to Peter's authorship, as it employs several of his favorite biblical allusions, and refers to both Chartres and his sometime patron Reginald de Bohun. Here again Peter congratulates his friend, but now warns him of the dangers of intrigue and gossip, and the difficulty of maintaining a clean reputation. Incorporating phrases identical to those in the other laudatory letter, Peter explicitly asks the bishop to "give to your voice the voice of virtue, and bring me into the full service of the [church of] the glorious Virgin, from my partial service."[122] At the end of the piece he uses the same imagery of an "exile scattered

121. Cohn, "The Manuscript Evidence," 49. The heart of Cohn's argument is that "the manuscript [Cambridge, Sidney Sussex MS 5–7, 15th century, MS 92, in Montague Rhodes James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1895), 74] was copied from a Durham manuscript. Hugh of Puiset left a version of the letters to Durham, which could have been an autograph, since Peter mentions him as a patron. This letter is in itself a very probable one in style and contents. Durham may have had an original tradition which contained it. In that case the improbable letter must be accounted for by the fact that Sidney Sussex 5–7 is admittedly a collation." For Hugh's bequest of a copy of Peter's letters to Durham, see *Wills and Inventories,* ed. J. Raine, Publications of the Surtees Society 2 (London, 1835), 1:4.

122. "Rogo autem vos in ea humilitate, in qua Dominum orare quis potest, ut detis voci vestrae vocem virtutis, et me ad obsequium Virginis gloriosae de dimidio integrare velitis": *Ep.* 218, *PL* 207, 508.

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about the earth" that appears in the other letter to John. Peter's motives and intentions can never be fully untangled from the obscure passages in these letters. Yet it seems clear that not only does Peter project his anxieties over the propriety of studying profane letters onto this namesake, but that the latter's success mirrors his own failure to achieve a desired position at Chartres.

The learned clerics of Letters 76 and 77 were intellectually and spiritually conflicted to be sure, but they also had more venal problems to confront. No doubt Peter used this namesake for a very contrived literary and spiritual effect. The existence of a second Peter makes the thesis of Bezzola and Dronke even more, rather than less, intriguing. Rather than a wholesale fabrication, Peter inserted into his collection a projection of his own dilemma onto another, perhaps more successful, cleric with similar interests and a similar position in the world. These two consecutive letters divide clerical morality into a threatening dichotomy. No doubt there were many other clerics at Chartres and elsewhere in whom Peter saw a shadow of himself, in that they struggled under the same pressures and felt the same personal conflicts over career and learning. His letter thanking John for promoting his namesake is both a heavily ironic literary game and a genuine bid for favor. Because Peter's position in the world depended upon both his clerical status and his need for employment, it is altogether natural that such a confluence took place in his letters.

Peter of Blois idealized the learned secular cleric even when he occasionally despaired for the fate of his soul. His ideal was clear enough: a cleric who could instruct the people in the means to salvation. He could neatly describe preaching, that is, imparting the word of God, as the "spiritual sword."[123] When the eleventh canon of the Fourth Lateran Council required all churches with adequate resources to have a master teaching arts and grammar to the clergy, and all metropolitan sees to have a theologian "who shall instruct the priests and others in the Sacred Scriptures and especially in those things that pertain to the cure of souls," it affirmed Peter's conception of the role of masters in society.[124] Again and again Peter emphasized the importance of writing works of literature, including his own letters, conducive to the salvation of their readers. However, as the canons of Lateran IV prohibiting learned clerks from taking secular offices remind us, there were attractive alternatives to a strict adherence

123. *Canon episcopalis*, *PL* 207, 1111.

124. Lateran IV, Canon 11, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2:240. On preaching as the spiritual sword, see below, chapter 5.

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to the ideal, some of them professional, but some of them literary, in the form of the pagan classics. A series of moral dichotomies circumscribed Peter's intellectual world: pagan classics—Scripture; law—theology; rhetoric—logic. His letter collection, and indeed the self he presents in that collection, is an elaborate construction of classical, scriptural, and patristic allusion, often placed in the service of a pastoral ideal. He never resolved these dialectical opposites through a neat synthesis, but instead oscillated between extremes. Ultimately, Peter left many of the questions unanswered in positively Abelardian fashion; he introduced intractable problems without the systematic confidence of an Aquinas or even a Peter Lombard.[125] Peter's presentation of seemingly incompatible alternatives ought not to be read as disingenuous backtracking but as a recognition of his dilemma.

Peter necessarily argued about learning in polemical contexts, as when he urged the archdeacon of Nantes to give his nephews a proper education, or when he defended his own method of writing, and he paid little attention to purely speculative matters. Although he had some training at Chartres and Tours, where Bernard Silvestris and others had taught eloquently about man and nature, no Neoplatonic sensibility pours forth from his letters, and when he advised immersion in reading, it is the generally construed concept of *lectio divina* that he has in mind. He had a much keener interest in practical ethics, but even then he rarely engaged in systematic enquiry: his professional career made that both practically and intellectually impossible. Not only was he busy, but his ethical dilemmas could rarely be resolved through such enquiry. His later letters show that he had at least an introductory training in high Scholastic method, and his biography indicates that he had contacts with the sort of humanism attributed to Chartres, but Peter concentrates instead on basic spiritual guidelines for his audience, and explanations of his own work, generally in the context of his career. Peter makes his most eloquent case for the value of learned clerics in a letter describing his colleagues in the Canterbury curia, and discusses the value of the classics in letters dealing with episcopal households in which he had an interest. His learning is not the learning of a detached humanist or a Scholastic theologian, but of an expert writer subject to severe professional and spiritual pressures.

125. On Abelard's method in relation to that of Peter Lombard, see Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life*, 269. For an original reflection on the "pre-Gothic," or even premodern, nature of Abelard's thought, see Johan Huizinga, "Abelard," in *Men and Ideas: History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance*, trans. James S. Holmes and Hans van Marle (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), 178–95.

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Catholic University of America Press

Chapter Title: Courts, Administration, and Pastoral Duty

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma
Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century
Book Author(s): John D. Cotts
Published by: Catholic University of America Press. (2009)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.9

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4 *Courts, Administration, and Pastoral Duty*

If the world of schools and masters presented Peter of Blois with both opportunities and difficult choices, the choices posed even greater dangers as he left behind the "scholarly militia" for the "curial militia" in the courts of bishops and kings. The same regular canon who challenged Peter's learning, and so inspired the *Invectiva in depravatorem*, took issue with his career choices. Apparently he regarded Peter as just another courtly cleric, seeking to get rich by currying favor. This could not pass without an aggressive response:

> You call a man a flatterer of the prince and an enemy of holy orders, and you do not even know him. But you have taught your tongue to speak lies and in this way iniquity hath lied to itself. (Ps. 26:12). The Spirit of God is my spirit's witness, that never was I a vendor of oil, nor am I wont to encourage magnates in their sins, or to praise the sinner according to his soul's desires.[1]

Flatterers, vendors of oil, and sinners populated not only the courts of the twelfth century, but also the satirical literature that grew up to ridicule those courts, and Peter himself penned some of the best courtly criticism in epistolary form. In this case, however, he had to defend his own reputation. He had no great difficulty doing so, for by this point in his career he had made great strides toward constructing a practical theology for a secular cleric operating in the developing institutions of Church and government. This practical theology rested above all upon a conception of pastoral duty that called on the ordained clergy to use their wisdom for the good of Christendom. In the *Invectiva* it serves as the basis for an *apologia*

1. *Invectiva in Depravatorem*, 1115.

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for his entire career. He tells his anonymous attacker that the evidence of his piety and good conduct lies in his writings, which

> freely rebuked our king and other earthly magnates, where there was good reason, carefully suggesting whatever (short of injurious invective) human devotion could contribute toward their edification. . . . At my instance and with the inspiration of God, the royal hand generously and magnificently showed forth with the grace of alms, and the church of the saints shall declare those alms [Eccli. 31:11]. The multitude of the court will testify that the king, thanks to my own poor prodding, with the aid of that One in whose hands are the hearts of kings, pardoned great debts for ecclesiastical persons, relaxed their burdens, and lightened the torments of the condemned.[2]

Contrasting images of the twelfth-century cleric compete in these passages. The first is that of the sycophantic *adulator* at court derided by John of Salisbury, Walter Map, Nigel de Longchamps, and many others; the second evokes a wise sage in the tradition of the Old Testament priests who advised the kings of Israel, and a good shepherd standing up for the *libertas ecclesiae*. In the final sentence, Peter directly confronts potential excesses of the administration of the "new monarchies": their unrelenting skill at collecting revenues and at meting out justice through punishment.

Peter wrote this tract near the end of his active life, shortly before he settled as archdeacon of London and devoted himself to his position of second highest honor in the chapter of St. Paul's. During that earlier career, while serving a king of Sicily, at least one king of England, and three archbishops of Canterbury, he had more than once lent his voice to the chorus denouncing the behavior of clerics in administration. His attack on Henry II's *curiales* in Letter 14 is today a standard text in the history of courtliness, a representative example of the "clerical rebellion" to the emerging courtly culture.[3] Yet the *Invectiva*, written after Peter had for all

2. Ibid.

3. The phrase "clerical rebellion" is taken from C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*, 176–94; Letter 14 is in *PL* 207, 42–51, but the *PL* version is unsatisfactory for reasons discussed in chapter 2 and in the appendix, below. For a new edition and discussion, see Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 140–65. For discussions of the letter's place in court criticism, see Türk, *Nugae Curialium*, 185–235; Jaeger, "Courtliness and Social Change," 287–309; Bumke, *Courtly Culture*, 415–23; Köhn, *"Militia Curialis"*; and Claus Uhlig, *Die Hofkritik im England*, 99–111. A sensitive interpretation of Peter's significance as a court writer, which came to my attention after the present study was essentially complete, is Neil Cartlidge, "An Intruder at the Feast? Anxiety and Debate in the Letters of Peter of Blois," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II: Twelve Essays*, ed. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 79–108. On twelfth-century exegetical debates about power relations relevant to this debate, see Philippe

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intents and purposes left the world of the court and when he was turning his attention toward matters spiritual, suggests that Peter always understood a model for clerical action through which he could retrospectively justify his presence in courtly circles.

Such a justification was necessary because the twelfth century inherited a number of ideas and ideals about clerical service, and few of them were kind to clerics who immersed themselves in secular affairs. Church councils, as well as polemical and satirical literature, had long objected to clerical involvement in the courts of the great, and specifically to their playing any role in judgments of blood. Peter of Blois's courtly dilemmas were not entirely new, since criticism of courtly clerics appeared early in the Carolingian period with such works as *De ordine palatii* of Hincmar of Reims. In the eleventh century, as the ecclesiastical reform movement gathered momentum, Peter Damian wrote the tract *Contra clericos aulicos*, and various polemics of the Investiture Controversy condemned the secular involvement of many bishops.[4] In 1139, the Second Lateran Council made it a spiritual imperative for clerics to resign positions at court and to do penance for that service, so that when the Third Lateran Council, which Peter attended, strictly forbade clerics from lay service, it affirmed an old tradition.[5] By the time Peter compiled his letter collection, the problem of *clerici curiales* had taken on a legal, not to mention a literary, life of its own, while clerics continued to place their minds and bodies at the service of lords both lay and ecclesiastical. The neat dichotomies of the Gregorian reform, and the categories of turpitude beloved by satirists, did not leave easy choices for the secular clergy, who occupied an ambiguous social space between monks and laymen.

This ambiguity has also troubled modern scholarship. The cultural space in which clerics operated, so-called courtly culture, remains a rather cloudy concept even as it inspires remarkably rich studies.[6] The term "courtly" now tends to refer to an all-encompassing "civilizing process" involving the mingling of lay and ecclesiastical, Latin and vernacular, chiv-

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Buc, *L'ambïguité du livre,* esp. 49–66 and 350–78, and "*Principes gentium dominantur eorum*: Princely Power between Legitimacy and Illegitimacy in Twelfth-Century Exegesis," in *Cultures of Power,* 310–28. Some of the material presented below appeared, in slightly different form, in Cotts, "Peter of Blois and the Problem of the 'Court' in the Twelfth Century."

4. Hincmar of Reims, *De Ordine Palatii,* ed. T. Gross and R. Schieffer (Hanover, 1980); Peter Damian, *Tractatus contra clericos aulicos, PL* 145, 463–72.

5. Lateran II, Canons 9 and 22, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* 1:198–99, 202; Lateran III, Canon 12, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* 1:218.

6. Gunnar Stollberg, *Die soziale Stellung der intellektuellen Obersicht im England des 12 Jahrhunderts*.

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alry and barbarism, in the context of a court surrounding a lay magnate, and occasionally an ecclesiastical prince. All of this mingling occasioned a continuing conflict with the reforming impulses of the Latin clergy. Studies of courtliness variously treat vernacular poetry, mirrors for princes, romances, and any source relevant to the problem of "courtly love," in order to explore broad cultural trends, often in teleological fashion (with modern behavior, social control, and perhaps even the dinner fork being the *teloi*). The work of the sociologist Norbert Elias on the early modern period has bestowed on the court enormous importance in social and cultural history as an arbiter of values and right behavior.[7] Yet the court of Henry II remains foundational in European political and institutional history as a stage in the centralization of government and the codification of administrative and legal procedures. Peter's writings record his struggle to follow and to articulate codes of behavior appropriate to different centers of contemporary power.

Because he had such an exalted sense of the value of learned scholars for the world, the court presented Peter with a complex and peculiarly clerical problem. It offered both spiritual dangers and immense possibilities, and it defied the systematic classifications that the theologians of Paris and the canonists of Bolgona would have taught him. The root of the problem, for historians as well as for twelfth-century clerics, lies in the fact that loaded terms like *curia* and *curialis* were and are often used without precise institutional referents. In this regard John Gillingham has warned that "not all administrators were *curiales* and not all *curiales* were administrators" and has cautioned against seeing, in the English context, too close a connection between men with some connections to the royal court and Angevin administration per se.[8] Peter's language is itself occasionally imprecise, as he variously employed *aula*, *familia*, *domus*, *capella*, *curia*, *palatium*, and their cognates. However, when he referred to the court with a negative connotation, or when he discussed it as a focus of others' criticism, he nearly always employed *curia* and *curiales*. Indeed, he was extraordinarily sensitive to the implications of the latter term.

Within this extreme lexical and semantic range, rife with conceptual imprecision, lies an opportunity to explore the richness of twelfth-century clerical culture with all its contradictions. There is no question that Peter could be inconsistent, but if one dismisses his court criticism as the

7. Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, and *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

8. John Gillingham, review of *Men Raised from the Dust*, by Ralph V. Turner, *Medieval Prosopography* 12, 1991, 131.

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dejected rant of a disappointed office seeker, as some have done, an important point is lost.[9] His letters reflect a great deal of professional and spiritual anxiety, anxiety brought about in large part by the ambiguous cultural position of the medieval secular cleric. The dilemmas that Peter faced stemmed not only from his own prejudices and disappointments, but also from the conceptual difficulties that helped bring about the pronouncements against courtly clerics of Lateran IV, and its overriding concern with the role of clerics and their learning in the Church.[10] When Peter referred to the *curia* and to *curiales* he integrated related ideas on education, pastoral duty, and the status of the clergy; his protests and apologies combined a number of different ideals and rhetorical strategies in order to mark out, in the course of a long career, a proper spiritual and professional course for a secular cleric that was consistent with prevailing trends in spirituality and ecclesiology. He was, to be sure, not entirely successful in doing so.

Peter's discussion of court, clergy, and pastoral duty, like everything else in his letters, "hung on another's judgment" and so depended on his ever-changing career circumstances. Many discussions of twelfth-century political culture, as noted above, portray Peter of Blois as a member of a clerical class uncomfortable with the courtly environment because of its immorality and general incompatibility with proper ecclesiastical order. This portrait of Peter is accurate to a point, but needs to be qualified. For Peter, the court was less a social force than a focus for the broader clerical dilemma. More often than not Peter spoke of ecclesiastical rather than secular courts, for it was there that he made his living and grappled with spiritual anxiety. In only one letter did he discuss knights, and he showed almost no concern with vernacular culture.[11] For Peter, the court, whether that of a bishop or a king, often presented threats to proper *ordo* in a highly charged political environment, the charge being provided by the aftermath of the Becket conflict, whose memory was still fresh in the mind of the English clergy when he first entered the service of Archbishop Richard of Canterbury in 1174. He may have disapproved of knights and romance, but he had more pressing and personal matters to address.

Although, as Gillingham warned, "administration" and "court" ought not to be used as synonyms, the English court depended for its importance on its status as a center of administrative power, and any discussion of the criticism surrounding *curiales* must accept burgeoning governmen-

9. See, for example, C. L. Kingsford, "Peter of Blois," *DNB* 45:49.
10. Esp. Canon 42, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* 1:253.
11. *Ep.* 94, *PL* 207, 293–97; see also Jaeger, "Courtliness and Social Change," 288ff.

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tal activity as its background. The work of courtly clerics is perhaps best conveyed by the vague but inclusive term suggested by Rolf Köhn, *geistlicher Hofdienst*. Peter himself used the terms *curia* and *curialis* in a variety of contexts, often referring specifically to the *curia Romana*, but also to the *curia regis*, not always using the terms with a negative connotation. In the case of episcopal households, Peter favored the term "household" (*domus*). Peter referred to *aulici* or *palatini* rarely, and both tend to be in the context of attack or ridicule.

The ecclesiastical reform movement, still building on foundations laid in the mid-eleventh century, insisted on the separation of secular and sacerdotal spheres and so affirmed a preexisting political dichotomy. In the process it turned this distinction into a moral imperative, for the clergy were to form a pure *sacerdotium*, free from all forms of spiritual pollution.[12] These included most famously simony, nicolaitism, and judgments of blood, but also clerical service in secular government. In Carolingian and Ottonian times the service of bishops in courts had been accepted, with the bishops serving as models of charismatic leadership in the presence of kings, though there were certainly criticisms of unscrupulous bishops.[13] The heyday of reform, however, coincided with the early growth of a new kind of rapacious administration that was an easy target for moral injunction. Concomitant with this desire for a pure priesthood, of course, was an opposite pole, which came to be associated with secular administration and with laymen. Service in the worldly courts carried a connotation of lay pollution, of insufficient distinction between the two spheres; more important, many writers of the reform movement, with their strict distinction between sacred and secular, wanted it to carry such a connotation. The term *curia* could conveniently express the opposite of proper clerical duty. Peter Damian had stressed this point one hundred years before Peter of Blois in his *Contra clericos aulicos:*

> Let it be warned, that a courtier might be entirely shut off from the clergy; he departs from the church to the court. Alas, what strange madness! Let him be an example to clerics, that one who is changed from a cleric to a courtier: he is made the world's slave.[14]

Anyone who discussed the cleric's proper role in a *curia* had to take into account that the term encompassed the poorer half of a polemical di-

12. See Amy G. Remensnyder, "Pollution, Purity, and Peace: An Aspect of Social Reform between the Late Tenth Century and 1076," in *The Peace of God*, ed. Thomas Head and Richard Landes (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), esp. 283–90.

13. See C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, 44–46.

14. *PL* 145, 467.

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chotomy. In Peter Damian's view, a cleric at court abandoned his proper *ordo* and entered a new one, thus crossing a well-defined social boundary. There was no intermediate ground, for in the transition to *curialis* the *clericus* was destroyed. Peter Damian's polar opposition between *ecclesia* and *curia*, however, was more moral and spiritual than practical. Even the most radical reformers saw the clergy as defenders of the *res publica* who needed to support the ordained secular powers. Still, the problem of the world, the *saeculum* where enterprising learned men earned a living, surfaced nowhere more prominently than in the centers of worldly power, be it in the ecclesiastical or secular sphere.

Peter's contact with these courts originated with his need for employment. As late as his mid-thirties he had probably not seen service in a secular or ecclesiastical court, though he had received a first-rate education at Tours, Bologna, and Paris. He most likely had an ecclesiastical career in mind at all times, whatever the particulars of his education were. John Baldwin has shown that career progression from Paris to the highest ecclesiastical office was almost taken for granted in the late twelfth century, so there is no reason to believe that Peter ever intended an Abelardian existence as a master (and in any case Abelard himself had followed the French court before settling to teach in Paris).[15] Southern's suggestion that John of Salisbury entered administrative service at the papal curia and then Canterbury as a result of thwarted Scholastic ambitions has been cogently criticized as "pure speculation" by Rodney Thomson.[16] Peter almost certainly taught at some point, but there is no evidence that he moved on to another career because he failed as a pedagogue. He was a man of letters well suited, as men of letters were thought to be, to serve in the households of the great, and Peter's far-ranging career interests help show how true this was for the twelfth century.

Peter's career from the 1160s to the 1190s, then, served as the backdrop to his discussion of proper clerical duties. He worked along lines of patronage within the Church and played a role in embassies, legations, and legal cases relating to matters of high Church policy. When Peter wrote about this experience and theorized about court service, he placed himself between the extremes outlined in the *Invectiva:* the grasping, blood-sucking *curialis* and the wise pastor intervening on behalf of the souls of his flock. A scholar in politics, Peter repeatedly emphasized that

15. John Baldwin, "Masters at Paris from 1179 to 1215: A Social Perspective," in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Oxford, 1982), 138–72; for Abelard, see M. T. Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life*, 130–31.

16. R. M. Thomson, "England and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance," *Past and Present* 101 (1983): 21.

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the learning of secular clerics was what made them suitable for courtly and administrative service. The debates over the role of learning in the Church again reverberated whenever he discussed his work in the world.

Peter of Blois, *Sigillarius* at Palermo: The Learned Cleric as Advisor of Kings

In 1167, Peter's sometime patron, Archbishop Rotrou of Rouen, answered an appeal from Queen Margaret of Sicily, who sought to shore up her position as regent during the minority of her son, William II. Rotrou sent Stephen of Perche to Palermo, with a group of French clerks, including Peter, who could administrate the kingdom until William came of age.[17] Once he was ordained a priest, Stephen of Perche became the consummate courtly cleric: he became royal chancellor and archbishop of Palermo and so followed the example of Rainald of Dassel in the Holy Roman Empire and Thomas Becket in England. Peter of Blois, meanwhile, became the seal-keeper of the kingdom *(sigillarius)*.[18] There seem to have been several foreign clerics working in the south at the time, but this expedition amounted to a major infusion of northerners into the corridors of Mediterranean power. Although "Hugo Falcundus" portrays Stephen and his ministry in a rather sympathetic light, he makes it clear that warning signs appeared almost immediately: these clerks were unwanted foreigners. On more than one occasion during his time at Palermo Stephen's methods seemed inappropriate to the new Sicilian context. When a palace revolt in Palermo coincided with an urban revolt in Messina, Stephen had no choice but to flee, and only two members of Stephen's entourage survived, including Peter of Blois. While the Messina mob tore Odo Quarrel, the master of Stephen's household, to pieces, Peter apparently was convalescing from malaria in Salerno, whence he escaped for France.[19]

This episode raises a number of questions crucial to our understanding of clerical court service and the movement of clerical personnel around Europe. Was Stephen out of his depth, unfamiliar with the remarkable complexity of Sicilian court life? Was he unfit to take the reins of power? Or was he simply the victim of intrigue? Peter's role in all of this is somewhat perplexing. In later years he made extravagant claims as to his importance for Stephen and for King William II. As *sigillarius* he presum-

17. See above, chapter 1, notes 43–45.

18. For Odo's appointment, see *La Historia o Liber de Regno*, 111–12. For Peter of Blois as *sigillarius*, see *Ep.* 131, *PL* 207, 390.

19. *La Historia o Liber de Regno*, 152–53, 158–60; *Ep.* 90, *PL* 207, 281–85.

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ably held a position of some responsibility, but this office has not been noted in modern scholarship as a crucial part of Sicilian administration, and "Hugo Falcundus," who often goes into great detail about court life, does not mention Peter at all.[20] Furthermore, royal administration was not only less itinerant in Sicily but structurally different from its counterparts in the north. Sicily possessed a notarial class with a distinct character and responsibilities, and the term *familiaris*, whose use with regard to royal and episcopal courts can be rather loose, seems to have had a more precise meaning.[21] This was a dynamic and elaborate system drawing on Greek, Arabic, and Latin elements.[22] For whatever reason, the knights and clerks of Stephen of Perche did not find a place in this synthesis.

The expedition to Palermo appears in Peter's letters as a classic tragedy of a great man (Stephen) brought low by intrigue, with Peter himself as one of the heroes. He asserts that many great men recognized his importance, to the point that he was offered choice ecclesiastical appointments, including the archbishopric of Naples (to which he claims to have been "solemnly elected"), to take him away from the court scene. Peter seems to have added this exaggeration in retrospect, for it appears only in a later version of the letter.[23] While this insertion may well bear witness to Peter's self-aggrandizing tendencies and to his penchant for wishful thinking about his own career, it also shows how he crafted an image of an ideal cleric through his shifting letter collection.

J. A. Robinson may be overstating the case when he says that the Sicilian debacle left Peter "embittered for life"; it certainly left him with a negative view of Sicily and its inhabitants, but it is probably not right to think that Peter despaired of ecclesiastical preferment at this time. Besides, the experience could not have entirely destroyed his career prospects: he had entered a great court and (he claims) had been offered at least two bishoprics and one archbishopric.[24]

20. The various offices of the Siciliam *regnum* are discussed in Hiroshi Takyama, *The Administration of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1993).

21. Takayama, "*Familiares Regis* and the Royal Inner Council."

22. Takayama, "Central Power and Multi-Cultural Elements at the Norman Court of Sicily," *Mediterranean Studies* 12 (2003): 1–15.

23. "Recolo quantas insidias aemulorum in palatio Regis Willelmi secundi quandoque expertus sum: qui cum multipliciter me a regis latere studuissent, et non possent amovere, prius ad unum episcopatum et alterum, demum ad Neapolitanum metropolim postulari et solemniter eligi me fecerunt": *Ep.* 72, *PL* 207, 224. The passage relating to Sicily is not in all the manuscripts of this letter, and seems to have been added to later compilations. For an example of a good manuscript showing the earlier version, see British Library MS Harley 325, ff. 358v–359r. For a good exemplar of the later version, see Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS 266, ff. 99r–100r.

24. *Ep.* 72.

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It was at Palermo that he held a formal title in a secular court (*sigillarius*) for the only time in his career, and this experience led to some of Peter's earliest writings on the problem of court service. As *sigillarius* he undoubtedly held a position of some responsibility, and he asserts that many great figures recognized his importance. As tutor to King William II of Sicily, Peter saw himself living up to the ideal of a wise royal councilor, just as he would in the *Invectiva*. In a letter written some years afterward to Walter Ophamil, archbishop of Palermo, who was then apparently in charge of William's education, Peter refers to his former pupil as a foil to his new king, Henry II:

> Although your king used to know his letters well, my king is far more learned. I would know, for I have been familiar with each one's aptitude in literary study. You are indeed aware that the Lord King of Sicily was my student for a year; after he took the elements of the art of versifying and literature from you, he obtained the reward of fuller knowledge through my watchful eye and diligence. As soon as I left his realm, however, he put his books aside and fled to the leisurely pursuits of the palace [*ad otium contulit palatinum*].[25]

While the immediate context of this passage is a eulogistic description of Henry II's merits, it does shed light on Peter's conception of his duties as a royal tutor. The more lettered the king, the better the king, and a wise man is needed to teach him. Peter imparted knowledge of letters *per industriam et sollicitudinem meam*. The king's character depends on the abilities of his tutor, so a comparison of two kings becomes a comparison of two clerics. Peter claims that his presence in Sicily prevented the king from immersion in worldly pursuits. Whether or not his tutelage was so efficacious, Peter at least strove for an ideal in which an erudite cleric was the ideal intimate of a potentially devious monarch. Only such a cleric could save a king from the *otium palatinum*, the leisured, dark side of the court. This last phrase, however, may also refer (negatively) to the *Capella Palatina*, the royal chapel at Palermo.

Peter's discussion of royal instruction illustrates what is essentially a struggle for sacrality at the royal court. Peter's reforming instincts coexisted with the ideal of sacred kingship that hinges on a king's anointing. When he urged William II's chaplain (perhaps Walter again) to thwart the designs of the king and the count of Loritelli over the see of Agrigento, he wrote "would that the virtue of consecration steer him away from his violence; for great is the effect of that sacrament."[26] Referring

25. *Ep.* 66, *PL* 207, 198.

26. "Virtus equidem consecrationis ab huius violentiis eum utinam temperasset; magna enim est efficacia sacramenti": Ibid.

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to the sacred qualities of kingship, Peter thus enmeshed the chaplain in a holy struggle to restore right order and to protect the liberty of a bishopric. This approach to courtly service is completely consistent with the demands of clerical *ordo*, and thus Peter could advocate it with no compunction whatsoever, advising the chaplain to show the gentleness and wisdom of Gregory the Great's ideal shepherd. He thus showed the right way for a cleric to approach dealings with the lay world, presenting ideal qualities of a courtly cleric: learning, mildness, patience, and considerable didactic skill. The sacred quality of kingship, moreover, significantly added to the cleric's responsibilities, for as an anointed of Christ the king had to learn to behave like a sage Christian. The cleric-courtier was an active instrument in reaffirming the divine powers of kingship through Christian learning.

The Archbishop's Court and the Ideal of Clerical Service

Whether or not this encounter with the levers of royal power in Palermo chastened or scarred him, Peter was not done traveling in the circles of magnates. He returned to France, perhaps to Paris and then Rouen, where he worked in the household of Rotrou of Rouen and eventually came into the patronage of Reginald, archdeacon of Salisbury. In 1172, he attested one of Rotrou's charters, rather far down the witness list.[27] He may have been brought on because of his skills as a letter writer, for he wrote six letters in Rotrou's name, all concerning major political problems. There are two to Henry II, two to his son the young Henry, and one to Eleanor of Aquitaine, all dealing with the crisis caused by the revolt of Henry's sons (the sixth letter is addressed to William of the White Hands); Peter may have included these letters in his collection as evidence of either his own importance or of his loyalty to the elder Henry.[28] Peter's duties with Rotrou also included those of the diplomat: Letter 71 describes a mission, also noted by William of Newburgh, on which he accompanied the archbishop of Rouen and Arnulf, bishop of Lisieux, to the court of the Capetian king. Peter's letter claims that he went on the king's orders, though he clearly answered to Rotrou as well.[29]

By 1174, then, Peter's career had brought him into contact with di-

27. See above, chapter 1, note 58.

28. *Epp.* 28, 33, 67, 153–55.

29. *Ep.* 71, *PL* 207, 219–21; Peter also wrote a letter on behalf of Rotrou and Arnulf describing the mission: *Ep.* 153, *PL* 207, 446–44. See also the description of the embassy in William of Newburgh, *Historia,* ed. Richard Howlett, RS 82.1 (London, 1884), 170. William does not refer to Peter by name, but refers to a delegation of *honorati viri.*

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verse segments of the clerical elite. He had worked in one royal court, and his letters give the impression of a churchman very close to the great discussions of the day. He claimed firsthand experience of the Octavian schism, discussed the Becket affair with John of Salisbury, and wrote for Rotrou regarding two separate rebellions of the Young Henry. Peter then entered the service of Richard of Dover, the new archbishop of Canterbury, probably in 1174. No matter who (if anyone) actually beckoned Peter across the Channel, it was certainly a professionally astute move. In comparison with France, England offered far more positions for scholars, perhaps twice as many, in both royal and episcopal administrations.[30]

Peter found a niche at Canterbury and served Richard for the duration of his time as archbishop, earning the title *cancellarius* as well as the partially sinecurial archdeaconry of Bath.[31] His exact duties as secretary in Richard's administration are unclear, though writing letters was certainly one of them. He also attended the court of Henry II, in all likelihood doing his lord's business. At some point Peter wrote to Richard from the royal court complaining that he could not get away:

> It is my desire to hasten back to you, but royal authority does not permit it. I have made thousands of appeals for leave to return, but I have neither suffered outright rebuff nor obtained leave. Everyday I complain of this delay, and I appeal to the fact that you have recalled me, but everyday comes the same response: "You shall leave tomorrow." In all the days of the year, I have yet to discover this "tomorrow"! When I search for it, it lies hidden, so perhaps when I do not look for it, it will present itself.[32]

While Peter may have exaggerated his troubles somewhat, this letter does suggest that his primary employer was Richard, who could order him away from the royal court. The letter adds that the members of the court refer to Richard as *dominus tuus*. There was considerable overlap in the personnel and responsibilities of royal and archiepiscopal *familiae*, but the evidence suggests that Peter was primarily Richard of Dover's man.

He performed several functions for the see of Canterbury: letter

30. John Baldwin, "*Studium et Regnum*: Penetration of University Personnel in French and English Administration at the Turn of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *Revue des Études Islamiques* 44 (1976): 20.

31. On the dates for Peter's tenure as archdeacon of Bath, see Revell, introduction to *Later Letters*, xxviii; *EEA 2*, xxvi, 219–20; *EEA 10*, xlix; *Fasti VII*, 29–29, 120; and Diana E. Greenaway, "The Succession to Ralph de Diceto, Dean of St. Paul's," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 39 (1966): 86–95.

32. *Ep.* 5, *PL* 207, 13.

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writer, witness, envoy, advocate, and general adviser. A letter from the archbishop to the dean and chapter of Lichfield regarding procedure for an upcoming election introduces Peter as follows:

> And so in this regard we send to you our beloved son and clerk, Master Peter of Blois, archdeacon of Bath, that by his counsel those who are coming might come more quickly, and after their long delay receive a speedy and magnified consolation.[33]

Peter may have been merely conveying instructions for his master, or he may have been responsible for intricate knowledge of canonical procedure. At any rate, this document shows him as a trusted advisor. Several Canterbury *acta,* along with two of Peter's letters, give him the title of chancellor *(cancellarius)* of the archbishop.[34] While the meaning of this title is unclear, a chancellor typically would be responsible for running the chancery, that is, overseeing the drafting of documents. Peter unfortunately tells us nothing about any such responsibilities. C. R. Cheney has concluded that the title was "not taken seriously"[35] as the mark of an important office. The sheer number of Richard's charters witnessed by Peter—twenty-four of those published in the recent edition—implies that Peter figured prominently among the archbishop's intimates at Canterbury.

The letters provide only vague hints of how Peter occupied his time in Richard's service. Letter 52, both playful and affectionate, informs Richard of his recent travels and travails. Responding to a request for more information about his whereabouts, Peter writes that he "exposed the sails to the wind and my life to danger" and found himself in a terrible squall, enduring all of it gladly for his master. At the end of the letter he provides information on the king:

> The Lord King makes for Gascony while I, traveling post-haste, follow him in his footsteps: would that I were able to run like him, so that I could catch him! Pray to the Highest, father, that, finding grace in His eyes I can joyfully return to you, your business having been properly and successfully completed.[36]

Peter needed to chase after the king in order to transact business for his lord. Part of the letter's purpose is to ask that the sender's services be ap-

33. "Mittimus itaque propter hoc ad vos dilectum filium et clericum nostrum magistrum P. Blesensem archidiaconum Bathoniensem, ut de consilio eius celerius veniant qui venturi sunt et super diutina dilatione festinam et duplicatam recipiant consolationem": *EAA 2,* no. 156, p. 130.

34. *Epp.* 38, 130.

35. Cheney, introduction to *EAA 2,* xxv–xxvii.

36. *Ep.* 52, *PL* 207, 159.

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preciated, since he reminds Richard of the travails involved in being an envoy and of how much hardship he has endured. The letter also shows that he answered directly to the king in some situations.

In Letter 41, on the other hand, Peter complains that the king has not given him *enough* direction; it is the only letter in which Peter appears as a direct representative of the king. Peter claims, as he does in Letter 52, that he is attempting to track down the king, but, wracked with dysentery, he has been detained at Portsmouth. "Tell me, most mild prince," Peter begs, "where and on what day you might be found, that I might run in the path of your mandates, and your word might be a lamp to my feet."[37] In tone, the letter is much like Letter 41, as it highlights the misery of a servant trying to keep up with the king. As in that other letter, Peter concludes by offering a bit of information, this time concerning the return of messengers from Rome and the arrival of envoys from Spain.

When Peter came to England to work for Archbishop Richard, he took on vastly different clerical duties than those of adviser and tutor to a young monarch, for which he had been responsible in Sicily. To understand Peter as a court critic, it is necessary to understand what his experience of the English court was, and to situate him in the milieu of *curiales*.[38] A rather simple way of putting the problem is to ask what Peter could have meant by the term *curia* when he claims in a letter that he entered, and then withdrew from, the "court." His intimacy with the archbishop of Canterbury placed him in at least an outer ring of the circle of the royal court, and he claimed personal acquaintance with Henry II, but many of the usual markers of importance in the royal administration are absent in Peter's case. He is almost nowhere to be found in the extant documents from the administration of Henry II, Richard I, or John.[39] As noted in chapter 1, he received a pension from Gilbert Foliot, but he appears in Henry's charters only four times.[40] Granted, this statistic should be used carefully, since a figure as nominally close to the king as Prince John's tutor Gerald of Wales is entirely absent from the same sources. It is relevant to consider that those courtiers who held ecclesiastical titles and subscribed frequently to royal charters did tend to be the intimates of the king who would play a prominent role in administration, ultimately acquiring epis-

37. Ibid., 121.

38. Parts of what follows appeared in an earlier form in John D. Cotts, "The Critique of the Secular Clergy in Peter of Blois and Nigellus de Longchamps," *Haskins Society Journal* 13 (1999): 137–50.

39. An exception is the close role entry of 1208 ordering that Peter's goods, confiscated while he was in France during the interdict, be returned to him: *Routli Litterarum Clausarum*, 1:108b.

40. See above, chapter 1, note 88.

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copal sees for themselves. The best examples from the 1170s and 1180s include Geoffrey Ridel, archdeacon of Canterbury and later bishop of Ely; John of Oxford, who advanced from dean of Salisbury to bishop of Norwich; and Walter of Coutances, who subscribed numerous royal charters as archdeacon of Oxford, and went on to be elected bishop of Lincoln, and was finally translated to Rouen in 1183. Peter had some of the same training, but his intellectual and professional aims made him a different sort of *curialis*. He certainly attended the court of Henry II, representing Richard of Dover and his interests, as demonstrated by his complaints about the hardships caused by Henry's manic schedule. While Peter dedicated several writings to Henry II, he only claimed to have written one letter on behalf of the king himself[41]; there is no evidence that he played a formal role in the royal administration. His dedications to Henry II and his writings of advice suggest that Peter attempted to work his way into the royal presence, into the centers of power. But it was a crowded court, and those who did receive royal favor always aroused intense jealousy. Peter had no doubt already learned this in Sicily.

Rather, Peter found his true niche in the archiepiscopal household at Canterbury. In the complex milieu of English ecclesiastical politics after the Becket affair, Peter had ample opportunity to comment on the courtly role of clerics. Becket himself posed a peculiar paradox, but also a new possibility. In death he presented a new ideal. He rose to his position in the Church as a result of his familiarity with the king and his service to the royal administration as chancellor. Upon assuming pastoral duties he renounced his secular title and fought for ecclesiastical liberty, but it was his skill in secular affairs that earned him the ecclesiastical position, which in turn led him to renounce his secular post. Some bishops who received their sees from Henry in return for administrative work supported Becket in his struggle, others did not. Peter of Blois belonged to the latter category, despite the encouragement he showed John of Salisbury and Thomas Becket in Letter 22.[42] When Peter, writing in Richard's name, defended three of these "curial bishops" with his pen, the linked issues of courtly service and the internal conflicts of the English church converged.

Despite the repercussions of the Becket controversy, Henry II had great success in placing his *curiales* in episcopal sees, and these men attracted widespread criticism.[43] Archbishop Richard intervened with the

41. *Ep.* 136, noted at *PL* 207, 404, but the text is printed with the letters of Alexander III (to whom it is written) in *PL* 200.

42. *Ep.* 22, *PL* 207, 77–82. See below, chapter 5.

43. For the elevation of these men, see Henry Mayr-Harting, "Henry II and the Papacy";

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pope on behalf of these ecclesiastics, giving the task of defending their character to his chancellor. Peter exonerated the bishops of Winchester, Ely, and Norwich from the charge that they were too involved in court affairs. The letter reiterates the worst charges of the *detractores* as follows:

> Detractors, hateful to God (Rom. 1), have suggested abominations to your Serenity, asserting that our venerable brothers, the bishops Richard ["of Ilchester"] of Winchester, Geoffrey of Ely and John ["of Oxford"] of Norwich, following the odor of profit and altogether casting aside pastoral vigilance, immerse themselves in the torrents of the curial *militia*, or should I say, *malitia*. They say that they engage in judgments of blood . . . and do not come to the table of the Lord.[44]

Peter begins his defense by offering one example of each bishop fulfilling his proper role. Richard of Winchester is second to none in his devotion to the altar and the giving of alms, while Geoffrey of Ely has proven his innocence *canonica purgatione*. John of Oxford visited the curia himself and through aggressive intervention strengthened his Church. Peter here agrees with John of Salisbury on the character of Richard Ilchester, and the evidence from the episcopal *acta* of both Richard and John of Oxford suggests that both men had some claim to be reformers.[45] Since the bishops were accused of neglecting their pastoral duties, Peter quickly shows they do in fact conform to that ideal, then moves on to another:

> It is not new for bishops to enter the councils of kings. For just as they precede all others in wisdom and honesty, so they are considered more prepared and effective for the administration of the republic [*sic expeditores et efficaciores reipublicae administratione censentur*]. For, as it is written, a kingdom that is not ruled by the counsel of wise men is governed in a less salutary manner. You have also read: woe to thee, o land, when thy king is a child and when thy princes eat in the morning. Blessed is that land whose king is noble and whose princes eat in due season (Eccles. 10:16–17).[46]

Peter goes on to refer to Old Testament priests like Joiadas and Zacharias who guided kings away from evil. The need for wise bishops to counsel kings had long been recognized, and played an important role in the epis-

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and Charles Duggan, "Richard of Ilchester: Royal Servant and Bishop," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series (1966), 16:13–15.

44. *Ep.* 84, *PL* 200, 1459. For a thorough discussion of the pun *militiae ne dicam malitiae*, see Köhn, *"Militia Curialis,"* passim.

45. *Letters of John of Salisbury*, ed. Millor and Brooke, 1:776–77. For Richard as a reformer, see also *EAA 8: Winchester*, ed. M. J. Franklin (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1993), xlix–li. On John of Oxford, see *EAA 6: Norwich 1070–1214*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1990), xxxiv–xxxvi.

46. *Ep.* 84, 1459.

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copal hagiography of the central Middle Ages.[47] Wisdom was for Peter essential to fulfilling pastoral duty, so it naturally figured in his defense of bishops who served the king.

The criticisms of and apologies for clerical court service often dealt with less exalted characters, and considered the role of run-of-the-mill clerics in administrative matters. In Letter 6, addressed to Master Ralph of Beauvais, Peter directly confronted the issue as it related to the clerks of Richard of Dover at Canterbury. The setting here is ecclesiastical and not royal, but the charges are similar. Ralph apparently questioned the propriety of curial life and backed it up with an allusion to Juvenal.[48] This exchange between the two clerics illustrates the wide avenue for critiques, because, in a passage that Gerald of Wales attributed to Ralph, he made a critique of professional education and offered a defense of the *auctores* very similar to that of Peter's in Letter 101.[49] The attack was dangerous and potentially devastating, for Peter's life at the time centered around his work at Canterbury: to attack the archbishop's household was to attack the morality of Peter's clerical life. He begins his defense in classic fashion, with etymology, by confronting the issue of judgments of blood through the traditional false derivation of *curia* from *cruor*, blood. After dismissing one of the most cherished etymological weapons of the critics of courtliness, he continues by stressing the ecclesiastical propriety of working for a sacerdotal *curia*, and even of making a living doing it:

> My good master! If you foolishly cling to that puerile derivation that *curia* comes from *cruor*, then the clerics who associate with the prelates of the church are not *curiales;* because blood judgment [*judicium sanguinis*] is not delivered in their presence. And while the canons prohibit curial clerics from promotion, the Lord frequently chooses clerics of the popes to serve as his priests.[50]

With one salvo Peter thus derides the derivation and then uses it to answer the critic. Just as Peter Damian did not allow for good *curiales*, Peter of Blois's rhetoric does not allow for deviation from his ideal of good cler-

47. Jaeger, *Origins of Courtliness*, 19–48.

48. "Clericorum curialium vitam damnatissimam reputatis, et in eius exsecrationem fere totam illam satyram Juvenalis expenditis: Si te propositi nondum pudet": *Ep.* 6, *PL* 207, 17. The reference is to Juvenal's fifth satire.

49. Above, chapter 3, notes 57–67. For Gerald's account of Ralph, see *Gemma ecclesiastica*, ed. J. S. Brewer, RS 21.2 (London, 1862), 5–7.

50. "Magister bone! Si puerilium derivationem naenias, quibus insenuistis memoriter retinetis, cum curia a cruore dicatur, clerici qui cum praelatis ecclesiae conversantur, curiales non sunt; nec enim apud eos judicium sanguinis exercetur. Cumque institutio canonica clericos curiales prohibeat promoveri, clericos pontificum frequentius elegit Dominus in sacerdotes sibi": *Ep.* 6, 17. For the *cruor-curialis* derivation, see Köhn, "*Militia Curialis*," 244ff.; and Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants*, 1:175ff.

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gy. This issue, at least in theory, was more straightforward for ecclesiastical settings because of the Church councils prohibiting clerics staining their hands with blood. But Peter does not simply justify the presence of clerics at a court, he reframes it in terms of pastoral duty by turning his attention to priestly matters. Clerics serve the shepherd ministering to his flock, and this allows Peter to answer a particular charge:

> You accuse us of impropriety because we always live from another's share [*quadra*—quoting Juvenal's "Fifth Satire"]. But if the pontiffs call us to this life of anxious duties, that we might work in the field of the divine harvest and in the threshing floor of the Lord's barn, what harm is there if we equally share in their goods? . . . And since he ought to live from the altar who serves the altar, it is not absurd if I, or anyone else who serves a pontiff at the Lord's table should be his companion at the dinner table.[51]

Ralph has clearly charged Peter with desire for earthly gain, and with profiting from the mass. Peter deftly discusses the issue in terms of the care of souls, not as remuneration from flatterers or secular judges; he sees his income as a fair compensation for the services he performs. He probably felt no need at this point in his career to dwell on something as obvious as clerical participation in the mass, but the sacramental duties of clerics would take on enormous significance in his later writings.[52] Having shifted the discussion to a cleric's proper fulfillment of *ordo*, Peter moves to a passionate, beautifully phrased exaltation of the archbishop's *familia:*

> These are the camps of God [Gen. 32:2] in which we live, and you should know that this is nothing else than the house of God and the gate of heaven [Gen. 28:17]. In the household of my lord archbishop of Canterbury are the most erudite men, among whom you can find all the righteousness of justice, every device of providence, and every model of doctrine. After praying and before dining they exert themselves in reading *(lectione),* disputation, and the judgment of cases. All the difficult and knotty questions of the realm are referred to us, and when we approach them among our fellows in common audience, each one of us sharpens his wits to speak his mind according to his own order and without quarrel or disparagement, and in a subtler vein offers what seems to him the sounder and better-advised course.[53]

The archiepiscopal curia hums along smoothly as a center of Christian learning in the service of the *regnum*. Richard of Dover's curial clerics

51. *Ep.* 6, 17. The allusion to Juvenal's use of *aliena quadra* appears also in Innocent III, *De miseria condicionis humanae*, ed. Michele Maccarrone (Lugano: Thesaurus Mundi, 1955), 22.

52. See below, chapter 6.

53. *Ep.* 6, 17.

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squeeze political counsel into their busy days *post orationem*, that is, after the have fulfilled their basic religious responsibilities. The *litterati* politely disagree with each other as they use their learning to do God's work in the Church. Peter's ideal, at once spiritual and intellectual, binds the cleric's status as *litteratus* to his proper function in the service of the great. Having answered the charges leveled against him, Peter turns the tables on his accuser by pursuing the issues pertaining to education and learning. The target seems to be the schools with their self-indulgent disputations and academic nitpicking: "You, on the other hand, continually arguing over trivialities with a tumultuous uproar and a seaman's cry, shake the air; in this way you waste your talents on the letter and syllable and the basic elements of doctrine."[54] Ralph's learning, as Peter sees it, is useless because it does not "build toward one's salvation." Peter, then, invokes a traditional dichotomy between empty disputation and useful, Christian wisdom, locating the latter in the salvific activity of clerics. It is not the *curiales* but the Scholastics who fight for the *vanitates huius saeculi*. This letter, which recalls in some respects John of Salisbury's hostility to the Cornificians, shows Peter of Blois linking his defense of clerical service to an educational ideal; two debates overlap to serve Peter's epistolary agenda. Peter introduces a traditional etymology favored by court critics (*curia* from *cruor*), only to dismiss it, then moves on to the familiar topos that Scholastic pursuits are *inutiliter*. With great rhetorical skill, Peter manipulated a number of ideals to place himself in the best possible light while making his opponent seem inept.

After Archbishop Richard's death in 1184, Peter of Blois remained at Canterbury in the court of his successor Baldwin of Ford. His duties continued to include letter writing, and four letters in the collection bear Baldwin's name, including three added to the collection in the late 1180s or early 1190s.[55] His name appears on fewer charters from this period and he no longer is referred to as *cancellarius*. Peter did, however, play a significant role in Baldwin's administration, and in so doing gained notoriety in the letters of the monks of Christ Church and the history of Gervase of Canterbury. This was the period of Peter's involvement in the legal proceedings that resulted from Baldwin's scheme to found a collegiate church at Hackington, proceedings that show Peter had considerable responsibilities as an advocate for his lord.

54. "vos autem tumultuosos strepitu et clamare nautico de nugis assidue disputentes inutiliter aera verberatis; vos circa litteram et syllabam et circa huiusmodi elementares doctrinae primitias, vestrum adhuc ingenium exercetis": *Ep.* 6, 18.

55. Epp. 82, 96, 98, 99. See above, chapter 2, and the appendix, below.

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Peter served as Baldwin's primary legal representative at Rome. A few years later Peter would describe himself as "among the fellow-diners and intimates of Archbishop Baldwin and, by special privilege of his love, first among his counselors."[56] This intimacy did cause its share of problems: Peter described himself as caught between two old school friends, Baldwin and Pope Urban, and entering into "the labyrinth of the dispute."[57] Once in the labyrinth, according to the letters of Christ Church, Peter behaved like a devoted henchman. One such letter describes Baldwin washing his hands with monks' blood, serving the interests of *laici*.[58] When the monks had initial success at Rome, they wrote home the news that Peter of Blois had done them more good than harm though his bungling arrogance.[59] Peter's name appears throughout the letters that describe the case. In August 1187, Hugh of Lucca explicitly referred to him as a shifty opponent and claimed that the archdeacon misrepresented the location of the proposed church to the pope.[60] On another occasion Baldwin sent Peter and Hubert Walter, then dean of York, to the royal chancery, where they recovered letters from the king affirming the monks' rights, broke the royal seal, and allowed the archbishop to add clauses to the letters.[61] Not at all proud of such behavior, Peter would eventually repent of his role in these events.

Peter's petitions for Baldwin at Rome did not constitute his last taste of ecclesiastical or royal service, though his life seems to have become less active at this time. He may have served in the household of Eleanor of Aquitaine during King Richard's captivity, and intermittently served the Canterbury administration of Hubert Walter in some capacity. He complained to Hubert on one occasion that such service was taking its toll on his health.[62] By the 1200s Peter seems to have been most concerned with his position as archdeacon in the cathedral chapter of St. Paul's in London—he even appealed to the pope when he felt his traditional place of honor was being threatened by the new precentor.[63] Although he continued to write about the court in the last decade of life, as when he con-

56. "inter commensales archiepiscopi Baldewini et eius familiares atque consiliarios quodam speciali dilectionis privilegio eram primus": *Later Letters,* no. 10, p. 56; the letter is also printed in *PL* as no. 211; and in *Epp. Cant.,* 554–57.

57. *Epp. Cant.,* 554–57.

58. *Epp. Cant.,* 82.

59. *Epp. Cant.,* 75–76.

60. *Epp. Cant.,* 81.

61. *Epp. Cant.,* 283. For the significance of this episode for the history of the royal chancery, see Nicholas Vincent, "Why 1199? Bureaucracy and Enrolment under John and His Contemporaries," 39–40.

62. *Ep.* 109, *PL* 207, 332–33.

63. *Later Letters,* no. 8, pp. 45–49.

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gratulated an archdeacon of Norwich for leaving the "furnace of curial cares," he no longer worked in the train of kings or archbishops.[64]

Peter saw himself, at least ideally, as a member of the Church intruded at times into the secular environment, and this point of view informs the whole of his court critique. When he felt that the ambiguous position of the secular cleric led to potential damage to his reputation or soul, he repeatedly appealed to the ideal of the pastor he could not always be. In his case the arena of clerical service ought to be construed very broadly, as encompassing any activity in which a literate ecclesiastic could practice his skills with the written word. Not all these activities were regarded as holy, and Peter turned to a number of different ideals in order to justify them.

Letter 14 and the Critique of *Curiales*

Before 1184, Peter argued repeatedly that the clergy could positively influence secular government through counsel. He recognized the common charges against clerics in both lay and ecclesiastical administration and deflected them through appeals to ideals of education and pastoral care. However, he knew that sometimes the criticisms of courtly clerics hit their mark, and in Letter 14 he added his own contribution to the contemporary critique of *curiales*. It appears in manuscripts of the early compilations of Peter's collection and thus has a *terminus ante quem* of 1184–1185.[65] He revised the letter, probably in the 1190s, and included a strikingly different version in his later compilations of the letter collection. The *Patrologia* edition of Peter's works conflates the two versions, leaving a large rambling affair that pursues several tacks at once, but in 1993 Lena Wahlgren published a new edition that takes his changes into account through careful study of manuscript evidence. The present study follows her lead in referring to the two versions 14A and 14B, and takes its citations from her edition.[66]

Peter wrote his first version of Letter 14 (14A) around 1182–1184 after Peter returned to Canterbury from the royal court. He speaks of having departed the *curia*, before which time he was accustomed to ride with the king's entourage and to serve *in via, in camera, in capella*. One can make an *argumentum ex silentio* that Peter spent the period from June 1182 to mid-August 1183 at Henry's court, attending to the affairs of his archbish-

64. *Later Letters*, 30–37. For this archdeacon's relapse to royal service, see Revell's note on 31.

65. Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 140–44. For an earlier dating, see Uhlig, *Hofkritik im England*, 100. See also the appendix, below.

66. Passages appearing in both versions will be cited as *Ep.* 14 A (B).

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op, since he attested no extant Cantebury *acta* during that period.[67] It is reasonable to suppose that the departure from the court Peter refers to in Letter 14 is his return to Richard's household. Yet Peter may not have fully extricated himself from the circles of the great, if we accept that he saw service with Queen Eleanor and take into account his relationships with William of Ely and Walter of Coutances in the 1190s. The moment of crisis recounted in these letters, then, does not refer to a single, life-changing decision but rather to a continuing dilemma inherent to Peter's chosen career. In the early 1180s numerous ideals for clerical service collided in his letters.

Letter 14A begins with a friendly greeting to the clerics of Henry's chapel who had helped Peter through times of adversity at the court, but immediately takes on a confessional quality. "Urged on by a certain spirit of ambition," he writes, "I immersed myself entirely in the waves of public life," thus "rejecting my order."[68] Peter calls himself a glutton, a *putridissimus pulvis et modico flatu dispergendus in ventos,* again echoing a common theme in confessional and pseudoconfessional literature.[69] He thus frames his discussion of the court in terms of confession and penance, as befits a man who began advanced theological study in Paris in the age of Peter Lombard. The language is that of conversion and personal reform; a continual emphasis on proper *ordo* certainly reflects the current of ecclesiastical reform.

Peter of Blois's attack on *curiales* focuses above all on the threat to clerical order represented by royal clerks, and so echoes the pronouncements of the Second and Third Lateran Councils as well as the reforming literature of Peter Damian and others. They suffer the dangers of travel only to place their souls in mortal danger, grasping for royal favor and incurring God's disfavor, all the while forgetting the virtue of poverty. It is clear that Peter has internalized a number of the currents of reform, above all the neat separation of clergy from lay magnates. His choice of the term *militia curialis* clearly illustrates the unholy blurring of boundaries.[70]

Peter cleverly interweaves his warning of spiritual dangers with the decided physical hardships and general wastefulness of the court. Yet

67. Köhn, "*Militia Curialis*," 228, supplies these dates, though he provides no reference except for Letter 14, which is silent on matters of chronology. The period 1182–1183 does, however represent a period during which Peter does not attest *acta* at Canterbury.

68. *Ep.* 14A, Wahlgren, *Letter Collections,* 152.

69. Cf. the Archpoet's *Aestuans intrinsecus,* in *Die Gedichte der Archpoeta,* 73–76; for a discussion, see See Peter Goodman, *The Silent Masters: Latin Literature and Its Censors in the High Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 191–227.

70. See Köhn, "*Militia Curialis*," passim.

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he then shifts course a bit, in his customary fashion, in order to absolve Henry II himself from responsibility, since Henry is the greatest king since Charlemagne. Of course, he is also sure to emphasize his own close relationship with the monarch, and how the king has always granted his requests.[71] Here Peter could have run afoul of the court critics, since not all his clerical contemporaries took Charlemagne's greatness for granted; his contemporary the secular cleric and exegete Ralph Niger, in fact, saw Charlemagne as a meddler in ecclesiastical affairs, and the emperor's loyal servant, Archbishop Turpin, as a false prophet. Even Ralph, however, saw Charlemagne as redeemed by penance and the construction of churches late in life.[72] Whatever Peter's true feelings about Charlemagne, he conceded that:

> men of our calling can more effectively serve princes in churches than in camps [*tamen nostrae professiones homines efficacius possent in ecclesiis deservire principibus quam in castris*]. I do not think it unreasonable that more simple men [*simpliciores*], who are less educated in the divine page, wish to fight in the service of the royal majesty. But as for one who has taken holy orders and is imbued with sacred eloquence, who now is thought to divert his fonts to another channel, and to return his borrowed talent with profit to his lord—it is altogether inexcusable for him to enmesh himself in secular duties.[73]

Peter here makes a direct condemnation of clerical life at court; he again emphasizes pastoral duty, pointing to the impropriety of churchmen pursuing *negotia saecularia*. He seems to cast aside the model of the learned cleric advising the king here, since he suggests there are better uses for wisdom than serving royalty. The cleric, who can serve God's flock because of his learning, is in fact not suited to courtly service, for that service is for the less learned. The very attribute that makes a cleric a cleric in most of Peter's work—his proficiency in practicing the written word and so in reading Scripture—here excludes him from an arena of service. It is a troubling paradox, and one that could not have been lost on Peter. For Peter there is now no place for true learning, that of *divina eloquentia*, except in churches and schools. Taken out of its ideal context in the court of the archbishop, the model of the sage cleric becomes irrelevant. In addition there may well be an element of intellectual snobbery at work here: Peter obviously contrasts scholars steeped in literature with those

71. *Ep.* 14A, Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 148.

72. Philippe Buc, "Exégèse et pensée politique: Radulphus Niger (vers 1190) et Nicolas de Lyre (vers 1330)," in *Représentation, pouvoir et royauté à la fin du moyen âge*, ed. Joël Blanchard (Paris: Picard, 1995), 145–61, here at 150.

73. *Ep.* 14A, 149.

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who simply keep accounts and attest documents, including (one could infer) royal servants like Richard of Ilchester and John of Oxford.

Peter concludes the letter by marveling that cleric-courtiers even put up with the hardship of courtly life. The food and wine are awful and disease-ridden, so much so that courtiers die as a result. Furthermore, the king's marshals *(marescalli)* are corrupt and rob those in the king's train. By introducing another category of royal servant Peter draws an institutional boundary between himself and the depraved kind of official he detests. Finally, Peter reminds the recipients of his literary work extolling the king's merits and bids them farewell with the hope that his letter will not be taken to pieces by *detractores*.[74]

The notion that the court was a magnet for ambition was not new; Peter wrote in an established tradition of court critique. But much of the imagery characteristic of that tradition—mimes, jester, lascivious knights—is absent in 14A. It is a sober critique rather than a rollicking satire. Although occasionally mordant, his language is not unremittingly hostile. He is careful to praise the king, going further than Walter Map to exonerate him from the evil taking place beneath his nose.[75] The main focus of Peter's attack, however, is the discrepancy between the ideal of priests effecting the peoples' salvation and the reality of ambitious clerics involving themselves in secular affairs for personal profit. At Henry II's court Peter found only clerics who fall short of the ideal.

The first version of Peter's letter collection, which he began circulating around 1184, includes a second letter to the *clerici aulae regiae*, probably written soon after his initial attack.[76] In this piece, printed as Letter 150, Peter apologizes to the clerics of the court for his earlier remarks. He begins his apology by attributing his earlier outburst to poor health and a misguided contempt of all worldly things. Since health problems seem to have troubled Peter continually, this claim is plausible. Because of his fear of the world, Peter wrote the earlier epistle "led by a weighty feeling of penitence" *(gravi paenitentia ductus)*. "I do not," writes Peter, "condemn the life of *curiales* who remain engaged in prayer and contemplation, are concerned with the utility of the commonweal and frequently carry out the work of salvation."[77] He had already appealed to this ideal elsewhere

74. Ibid., 151.

75. Walter Map, *De nugis curialium*, ed. M. R. James, rev. C. N. L. Brooke and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 512–13.

76. On the textual history and dating, see Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 140–44.

77. "sed nec vitam curialium damno qui licet orationi et contamplationi non vacent, rei tamen publicae utilitatis occupantur et frequenter opera salutis exercet": printed in *Ep.* 150, Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 170.

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(in his letter defending curial bishops), and perhaps he is tacitly admitting that his reforming zeal took him too far from it.[78] It is crucial that Peter attributes his earlier diatribe to an overwhelming wave of penitential feeling, for Peter more than once claims that he has repented of his earlier transgressions. In Letter 14 he had been *quoddam spiritu ambitionis ductus*, while in Letter 150 he was *gravi penitientia ductus*. He is literally led in opposing directions, a dilemma that appears throughout his letter collection, in his treatises *De poenitentia* and *De confessione*, and in the writings of other clerics. Three decades earlier Gerhoh of Reichersberg had argued for the need for penitence among *curiales:* "Indeed penitence is made false when the penitent does not stand down from his courtly or financial duty."[79] John of Salisbury once claimed that Becket had done penance for his service as royal chancellor, and Gerald of Wales, at the end of his life, claimed repentance for his service in the world.[80]

The clerks of Henry's court, however, have not yet felt any pangs of guilt. Instead, they

> fight for this vanity of vanities [Eccles. 1.2] in labor and toil [2 Cor. 11.26–27] . . . and in other vicissitudes of life, in which they would earn the glory of martyrdom if they suffered them in the name of Christ. Instead they are martyrs of this life, volunteers for the world, disciples of the court and knights of Herlekin.[81]

The root cause of all this is ambition, which Peter freely admits to having once felt. Ambition leads the courtiers to a perverse desire to suffer for the world, to use the energy and fortitude that could serve the Church, and even the courtier's own soul. Writing to King William of Sicily's chaplain in Letter 10, Peter had suggested that a chaplain *could* be persecuted for Christ. The clerics Peter attacks here have wasted the possibilities of the court. The term *milites Herlekini* could be intended as a perversion of *milites Christi*, to heighten the contrast Peter draws between proper and improper use of one's talents. Furthermore, the knights of Hellequin (or Harlequin, or Herla) must have been a recognizable grounds for comparison, as he appears in the *De nugis curialium* of Walter Map and the history of Orderic Vitalis; this marks a rare occasion where Peter borrows from the more literary and satirical burlesque strand of court cri-

78. See above, note 54.

79. "falsa etiam fit poenitentia cum poenitens ab officio vel curiali vel negotiali non recedit": Gerhoh of Reichersberg, Commentary on Psalm XXIII, *PL* 193, 1095. See also the passage in Lateran II, cited above, note 5.

80. John of Salisbury, *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, no 167, ed. Millor and Brooke, 2:99; Gerald of Wales, *De invectionibus*, RS 21.1, 151.

81. *Ep.* 14 A (B), Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 147.

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tique represented by Walter.[82] Peter's spelling of the proper noun *Herlikinus* suggests that he wrote in a tradition similar to that of Orderic, who used the spelling Herlichini.[83] J.-C. Schmitt sees in Orderic's account of the knights of Hellequin, part of a ghostly nocturnal ride that haunts the clerics of Normandy, a reflection of the tripartite ordering of medieval society.[84] Peter is clear that he has in mind the knights—*milites*—of Hellequin, a loud, savage lot in Orderic's account (less vividly described by Walter Map); their fleeting mention here plays on both the secular connotations of court service and complements the tumultuous imagery through which he condemns the court.[85]

The theory of sacred kingship, to which Peter had appealed as tutor to the king of Sicily, drives much of Peter's apology for attacking *curiales*. Service to the king is incumbent upon good clerics because of the ruler's divine qualities, including *curatio scrophularum* (a very early reference to the "royal touch"), and his very status as *christus Domini*.[86] A consequence of kingship's sacred character is that clerics in fact fulfill their proper role by serving him; the letter inserts the *curia* and *curiales* into what seems to be a decidedly royalist theology of power. The nearly contemporary *Dialogus de scaccario* similarly explains the role of the king's administration within a framework of theocratic kingship.[87] In many respects Letter 150 is a regression to an ideal of kingship that ran counter to the reforming tradition most recently embodied in Thomas Becket, and in 1184 it sat uncomfortably in Peter's letter collection alongside more explicitly reformist ideals. For Marc Bloch, these letters represented simply a *sic et non*, a rhetorical exercise not to be taken seriously.[88] Yet this view ignores the seriousness with which Peter regarded the curial dilemma. Peter recognized at several points in his letter collection that he worked between incompatible ideological traditions, and this was a thorny problem for him. At any rate, in later years the apology ceased to circulate with Peter's

82. See Walter Map, *De nugis curialium*, ed. M. R. James, rev. C. N. L. Brook and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1983), 27–31.

83. Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 8.3.367–77, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 4:237–51.

84. J.-C. Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 93–121.

85. Laurence Harf-Lancner, "L'Enfer de la cour: La Cour d'Henri II Plantagenet et la Mesnie Hellequin," in *L'État et les Aristocraties (France, Angleterre, Ecosse) XIIe–XVIIe siècle*, ed. Philippe Contamine (Paris: Presses de l'École Normale Supérieure, 1989), 27–50.

86. See Frank Barlow, "The King's Evil," *English Historical Review* 95 (1980): 3–27, on Peter at 19–20.

87. Richard FitzNigel, *Dialogus de scaccario*, ed. C. Johnson, rev. F. E. L. Carter and D. E. Greenway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

88. Bloch, *Les rois thaumaturges*, 41–42, trans J. E. Anderson, 22.

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letters, and his later letters make no reference to the king as anointed.[89] Peter struggled in the 1190s to reconcile competing ideals, and revealed his struggle by returning to Letter 14 and revising it.

In the versions of Peter's letter collections that he compiled after 1184, the revision of his attack on Henry's *curiales*, edited by Wahlgren as Letter 14B and dated by her to around 1193, appears without the apology that 150 had offered. Peter was not entirely removed from the circles of the great: he continued to witness *acta* and write occasional letters for Archbishop Hubert Walter, the quintessential royalist bishop who did not renounce his secular office; he was an intimate of William de Longchamps, bishop of Ely, and even appeared in the circle of Eleanor of Aquitaine.[90] Letter 14B retains many passages from the earlier version, along with its confessional mood. But this mood has darkened considerably. It is not only a spirit of ambition but the *blanda principis promissa* that led Peter to the court. A sense of professional disappointment surfaces in new phrases like *qui magis diligunt minus diliguntur.* Only worthless, worldly clerics receive promotion to the highest levels of government. The putrid food and wine of 14A is even fouler here,[91] and Peter bids farewell with admonition rather than thanks. Moreover, this is the only place in Peter's letters where the jesters, mimes, and actors of John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* take the stage. Once and for all, it seems, the ideal of the sage counselor recedes before the reality of ambitious, grasping clerks and courtly decadence.[92] The passage enumerating Henry II's virtues (he was in his grave by this time) is nowhere to be found. Peter repeats the sentiment that clerics should stick to *ecclesiae* but now goes even further:

> Some say that, with an eye to correction and edification, Moses was sent to Pharo, Jeremiah to Sedechias, Helias to Ahab, Joiadas to Josia. Cleric-courtier, did the Lord really send you to the king? It was rather ambition that sent, or rather, intruded, you into his service [*In obsequium eius te misit aut potius intrusit ambitio*].[93]

89. See Ethel Higonnet, "Spiritual Ideas in the Letters of Peter of Blois," *Speculum* 50 (1975): 218–44; Wahlgren, *Letter Collections,* 166.

90. For Peter in the service of Hubert Walter, see *EAA 3*, nos. 365, 369, 372, 394. On his relationship with William de Longchamps, see *Ep.* 89, *PL* 207, 278–81, and *Ep.* 108, *PL* 207, 332; for his relationship with Eleanor, see *Ep.* 87, *PL* 207, 276.

91. At 14A, 149, Peter writes "apponitur in mensa militis aut clerici panis plumbeus loliatus et crudus. Vinum vero aut arcore aut mucore corruptum, turbidum, unctuosam, piceatum et vapidum." 14B, 159–60, reads: "Apponitur clerico aut militi curiali panis non elaboratus, non fermentatus, confectus ex cervisiae faecibus, panis plumbeus, loliatus et crudis. Vinum vero aut arcore aut mucore corruptum, turbidum, unctuosum, rancidum, piceatum et vapidum." He goes on to add, "Cervisa, quae in curia bibitur, horrenda gustu, abominabilis est in aspectu."

92. *Ep.* 14B, Wahlgren, *Letter Collections,* 158.

93. Ibid.

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Here Peter explicitly denies the applicability of a traditional Old Testament parallel, that of the priest assuring that kings behave in a pious manner, to the courtly reality. Peter had made this exact comparison between the Old Testament priests and Henry's episcopal appointees a decade earlier, so the "some" of "some say" could include Peter himself. It is intriguing to note that Ralph Niger, who had long enjoyed contacts with some of Peter's intimates, may well have produced his critique of Charlemagne during the period between the two versions of the letter. Ralph, moreover, viewed Henry II as the "Ahab of the English."[94] Even if Peter had not read Ralph's work firsthand, he may well have drawn on contemporary developments in exegesis to reevaluate the nature of royal government. In the face of the miseries, disappointments, and moral turpitude of court life, he rejected the potentially legitimizing interpretation of Old Testament kings and priests out of hand. His attempt to make the court a sacred space had failed.

The Penitent Clerk between Christ and Caesar

The letters on Henry II's *curiales* bring into relief Peter's always conflicting views on the position of clerics in the world. It is extremely difficult to advance arguments concerning Peter's mood, or his "true feelings" on the matter of clerical court service, because he seems to make several displays of penitence. The original version of the attack on the royal *curiales* is highly apologetic for his past behavior, but it is nowhere near as damning as the revised version of the 1190s. Although Peter claimed to have left the court, he still found himself involved in the king's business at the end of the 1180s, helping prosecute the legal case over the church at Hackington. This case was not Peter's finest hour, and the monks of Canterbury, including the historian Gervase, were clearly not impressed. His prosecution of the case throws into relief the pressures facing Peter during his years at Canterbury. When the ugly business was over for Peter, he apologized directly to the monks, blaming his actions on the king and archbishop, beseeching them to "pray for a penitent son." He conceded that "the Lord allowed me to be grievously deluded, at the instance of the archbishop; He allowed hypocrisy to rule because of the sins of the people."[95] Peter also saw the archbishop as another victim of the royal whim:

> King Henry, who always wished Canterbury's archbishop, Baldwin, to have grave and unforgivable clashes and constant troubles (in order that he hold

94. See Buc, "Exégèse et pensée politique," 146, 160.
95. *Epp. Cant*, 335.

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him forever cowed and beholden to him), compelled and coerced me to toil against you, and against God and my own best interests, for eight months, on his behalf at the Roman curia, at my own expense and in continuous danger of my life. However, I lost the case and my expenses.[96]

This letter was written a few years later, once Henry's remains lay in Fontevrault and Baldwin's in Acre, when Peter could perhaps have afforded greater candor. Though Peter's motives for writing may be questionable, his other comments on the affair show that he saw it as especially problematical for a secular cleric like himself. Baldwin found himself the pawn of Henry II's designs, although the original plan for the Hackington church was not inherently misguided. Baldwin and his predecessors had apparently wanted an elite church for the most learned clerks, men like Peter of Blois, to serve as an advisory board.[97]

The king, however, had other plans for the college, since he could use it as an instrument of his own ecclesiastical policy. The realities of the political culture of the time rendered the role of the secular clerics multivalent and ambiguous. Peter may have thought of himself as an ecclesiastical servant rather than a true royal *curialis,* but the distinction was not at all clear (least of all to the Canterbury monks). Peter summed up the problem, which had major implications for his own status in the Church and the world, in a letter probably written in the late 1190s:

All who are elevated to the throne of Canterbury swear an oath to the highest pontiff when they receive the pallium; when elected they none the less pledge an oath of fidelity to the king. He who thus swore, however, was immediately suspended between Christ and Caesar, between the gospel and the customs of the land, between ignominy and good repute, between the hatred of God and the favor of men. Thus obliged to two lords, he will either love one and hate the other, or revere one and despise the other [Matt. 6:24]; he is so suspended because he faces danger for his loyalty from both sides. If you should say that this perplexity could be alleviated because he can take up the one without danger of his soul, indeed to adhere to the Gospel and to hold the king and the realm's customs in contempt, you will see that he can not wisely do this without the counsel of wise men.[98]

The letter neatly highlights the dilemma in which Peter, as well as Baldwin, found himself. The collegiate church was ideally suited to him, and it would be the perfect opportunity to pick up prebends and prestige as a clerical adviser—the role he had become accustomed to. Yet as Baldwin's

96. Ibid.
97. See William Stubbs, introduction to *Epp. Cant.,* xxxv.
98. *Later Letters,* no. 10, p. 59; *Epp. Cant.* 554–7. Also printed in *PL* 207 as *Ep.* 221.

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man he was the king's man and exposed to charges of being a *curialis*. His prosecution of the Hackington case represents an unfortunate episode in his career, one that may have embittered him to the way of life he found at royal and episcopal courts. But he did not abandon such service entirely. The case came a few years after he had already expressed his sorrow at immersing himself in courtly life, so it very difficult to point to a single moment of conversion. Instead, the combined weight of the accepted moral injunctions against *curiales*, along with his failures, seem gradually to have worn at Peter; his frustration, however, is manifested not in a single, definitive rejection of his way of life, but in extreme oscillations between affirming the value of learning and service, on the one hand, and apologizing for his depravity, on the other. Certainly Peter's background exploring problems of practical theology in the schools, combined with his pastoral experience and demonstrated knowledge of decretals, also helped motivate this kind of writing. The clerical dilemma necessitated periodic displays of penitence, borderline conversion experiences of the kind that some of Becket's biographers attributed to the Canterbury martyr.[99] In a sense, Peter's dilemma was Becket's dilemma, but through his martyrdom the latter left no doubt as to where he ultimately stood. Peter leaves his readers with alternating, sometimes contradictory, displays of penitence that illustrate the conflict at play in the clerical condition.

The later compilations of Peter's letter collection show that his clerical self-examination took on greater force and frequency in the letters released after the initial issue of 1184. In Letter 102, which appeared in issues of the collection beginning in the mid-1190s, Peter wrote to an abbot of Reading who had lived the life of a courtier. The wide gulf between the monastery and the court occupied an important place in the genre of vocational letters as written by Hildebert of Lavardin, Peter, and others. Here the monk in question is no less than an abbot, one who has grievously shirked his duties. The letter takes the form of a dialogue, in which he has a chance to bewail his poor choices.

> I ought to mourn for the days I lost, because I lived wretchedly, having become a seller of gold; I follow the court, I enmesh myself in the councils of magnates, I judge those below me, and I venerate and adore my superiors more than the granter of my salvation. Thus neglecting and destroying the patrimony of Christ under the pretext of false largesse, in the pursuit of hollow glory and the magnificence of secular pomp, I utterly ruin myself.[100]

99. On the complexities of the idea of conversion in the 1160s and 1170s, see Michael Staunton, "Thomas Becket's Conversion," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 21 (1998): 193–211.

100. Ep. 102, *PL* 207, 318.

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The abbot's complaint continues at length, opposing his duties as abbot to his worldly interests, which include a combination of courtly service, financial dealings, and generally loose living. He despoiled paupers and did not give proper aid to widows and orphans, all because of *amor saeculi*, from which the abbot now tries to wean himself. After reviewing the abbot's complaint, Peter adds a consolation replete with scriptural affirmations that the abbot can still be saved if he renounces the world, though the change will cause great distress to the secular lords who will see a retreat to the monastery as impudence. "It is of greater merit," however, "to show obedience to a lesser or equal than to your superior: for this obedience is driven by love."[101] Again Peter presents *caritas* as the antidote to the perils of courtly service, a love that is bound to self-examination and penitence. His letters thus employed received ideals in such a way as to inject his concern with penitence into a consideration of the dangers of the court.

Approximately twenty letters of the later issues of the collection deal with clerical court service of one type or another. In his later years he did not focus his attacks on the royal court alone; in fact he did not discuss it with much greater frequency than episcopal courts. A letter dating to the 1180s (Letter 25) attacks clerics at the episcopal household at Chartres, referring not to *aulici* or *curiales* but *officiales*.[102] Here Peter inveighs against the *officiales* of Chartres, using imagery common to the period. He urges the recipient to leave "Babylon" and he plays the same sort of etymological game he dismissed in Letter 6. Here he suggests that *officialis* comes not from *officium* (duty) but *officit* (hinder or impede),[103] focusing upon the unbridled immorality of voracious clerks as they collect ecclesiastical revenue.

> The sole intention of the officials is this: that in the service of their bishops (as if instead of them) they might shear, cheat and skin the poor sheep entrusted to their jurisdiction. For these are the bloodsuckers of the bishops, drinking the blood of others in order to spit it out again.[104]

Here the clerics who are supposed to help the bishop do the work of salvation, as the clerks of Archbishop Richard are shown to do in Letter 6 to Ralph of Beauvais, are engaged in behavior antithetical to Peter's con-

101. Ibid.

102. On *officiales*, see Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants*, 1:175ff.; and C. R. Cheney, *English Bishops' Chanceries 1100–1250* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1950), 8, 20–21.

103. *Ep.* 25, *PL* 207, 89.

104. Ibid.

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ception of proper episcopal duty. Having *officiales* taking care of *negotia* allows a bishop to rob widows and orphans while avoiding blame. "Thus the bishop snatches others' goods with his long hand, and while he himself avoids responsibility for the crime, he hands off the risk of blame and notoriety to his officials."[105] Peter thus identifies the officials as transgressors of duty as they assist a bishop in subverting his own office. The critique is not entirely original, as the same sort of language, particularly the imagery of blood drinking, appears in the writings of Peter the Chanter and others.[106] In Peter of Blois's hands this imagery fits into a broader exhortation for clerics to think more upon spiritual matters. Although he had previously praised the member's of Archbishop Richard's household, Letter 25 should not be taken as Peter turning against the court qua court, since in these two letters Peter has different ideas of court in mind. And the distinction between *curiales* and *officiales* is telling. The latter, in this context, seem to involve themselves in financial matters. Clerical involvement with *negotia* is not restricted to episcopal or royal administration, since Peter criticizes a *clericus negotiator* in a manner that refers to the personal financial interests of the recipient.[107] The legal responsibilities of episcopal officials may also have inspired Peter's attack, since he had written a confessional invective against the legal profession upon leaving Bologna many years before.[108]

In addition to ambition, greed, and worldliness, Peter continually attacked intrigue as a prevalent danger of courts of all kinds. In Letter 20 he used a critique of the court in an impassioned, almost pathetic, complaint at being held from a promised position at Chartres. After stating his position that the bishop changed his mind because of *detractores*, he writes that "in the households of bishops and kings there live pestilent frogs and vicious flies of Egypt, chatterbox flatterers, talkative and deceitful [Ex. 7:26–29]."[109] These frogs *(ranes)* strive only for money, whereas Peter prefers *pauca cum puritate conscientiae*. For Peter, the sad thing is that were it not for *adulatores*, he could have improved the bishop with his *conversatio*, and convinced him to provide less support to knights and

105. Ibid.

106. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants*, 1:176.

107. *Ep.* 17, *PL* 207, 62–65. Peter seems to have added a passage on merchants to this letter in later compilations. The passage from "sane fenerator . . . damnatio sine fine" appears in the *PL* at col. 63. In British Library MS Royal 8Fxvii, it is added to the margin at f. 14r. The letter appears in its complete version in Cambridge Corpus Christi College MS 266, at f. 29r–v.

108. See above, chapter 3, note 38.

109. "habitant siquidem in domibus episcoporum et regum ranae pestilentes, coenomyia, et sciniphes, musca Aegypti gravissima, loquaces adulatores, garruli et mendaces": *Ep.* 20, *PL* 207, 72.

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more to the Church. Again, the good courtier looks out for ecclesiastical liberty through good counsel.

In the 1190s Peter again wrote to high-ranking bishops (specifically, bishops with close ties to the royal administration) on the subject of episcopal duty. As he had in 1173, Peter corresponded with some of the most notorious royal administrators, consoling William of Ely, for example, after he lost the chancellorship, and inveighing against Hugh of Coventry for his role in ousting William.[110] Peter initially declined to come immediately to Archbishop Hubert Walter's court, pleading illness,[111] but 1195 found him writing on Hubert's behalf. He referred to his service at Canterbury in an important letter written to the archbishop of Rouen, Walter of Coutances, in that same year. Congratulating Walter on his success as a mediator between Richard and Philip Augustus, Peter offered to help fight Walter's detractors while the latter was in exile.[112] It is possible Peter was fishing for a job in Rouen, since he enthusiastically offered to aid Walter in his troubles. He certainly presented credentials with a flourish: his advice was so wise that the archbishop of Canterbury loathed his absences from court. Still, Peter mourned for the days he lost living *perdite* and planned to devote his life to God—he suggested that Walter should consider doing likewise. The letter ends with a long discussion of Walter's duties to his flock, including defending the poor and looking out for widows and orphans. Peter also wrote a letter to Walter on the value of prayer, in which he urged the archbishop to leave curial concerns behind and to find solace in prayer and religious study: "Take into your hands the sword of the Holy Spirit, that is, the word of God (Ephes. 6:15)."[113] Apparently Peter had given this advice before, for he wondered if Walter had received any of the frequent letters he had sent him. At any rate, Walter did not seem to have retired from royal administration, though Peter had no difficulty with this: in his *Canon Episcopalis* written for Walter's nephew, Peter he would praise Walter (along with Becket) as the ideal bishop.[114]

Peter's letters from the 1190s do not have quite the richness of imagery or ideology of the sequence formed by Letters 14A, 150, and 14B. With their emphasis on pastoral duty and the importance of sacred learning in the form of *divina pagina* and *lectio*, they represent an attempt to praise curialist bishops through a model that had limited relevance. In

110. *Epp.* 87, 89.
111. *Ep.* 109, *PL* 207, 332–33.
112. *Ep.* 124, *PL* 207, 367–73.
113. *Ep.* 125, *PL* 207, 374.
114. *Canon Episcopalis*, *PL* 207, 1099.

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the same decade, however, Peter wrote a letter for Hubert Walter on a decidedly practical matter upon which the whole problem of courtly clerics depended. Writing to the dean and chapter of Salisbury, Peter confronted the issue of absenteeism—clerics holding incomes from churches they seldom set foot in. For lay rulers, the fact that clerics could hold ecclesiastical incomes was one of their most attractive qualifications for administrative service. Peter occasionally visited his archdeaconry, and his active intervention as dean of the church of Wolverhampton shows it was not entirely a sinecure, but Peter was certainly an absentee from several of the churches from which he held canonries.[115] He had written on his own behalf a letter to Salisbury complaining that he could not receive adequate income if required to maintain residency.[116] His letter is short and devoted to the pressing question, particularly as it relates to the important royal judge, Master Thomas of Hurstbourne.[117] There are no appeals to models or ideology, only to necessity:

> Because the faith and diligence of Master Thomas [of Hurstbourne] has many times been proven in the public dealings of the realm, we do not wish for you to compel his residency so long as he exerts himself there. . . . It is certain that certain men are necessary for the lord king, some for us; some are sick, some fight in the schools, some are off on pilgrimage. For such men their prebends do not suffice for residency.[118]

At the end of his career Peter could still defend clerical service in the courts based on the realities of twelfth-century government. It is unlikely that he bit his tongue while composing these sentiments for his master, the justiciar, archbishop, and chancellor, for he still chose to include it in his collection. Behind the conflicting ideologies and focus on ecclesiastical liberty or theocratic kingship, the debate over clerical service hinged on the problem of employment for clerics and the overlapping administrative needs of the royal and ecclesiastical powers.

In the final decade of Peter's life he addressed the problem of *curiales* only intermittently. The days of defending the intellectual elite of Can-

115. *Later Letters,* no. 4, pp. 25–30.

116. *Ep.* 133.

117. On Thomas, see Ralph V. Turner, *Judges, Administrators and the Common Law in Angevin England* (London and Rio Grande: Hambledon Press, 1994), 12, 13, 111, 112, 147, 166, 193.

118. "Quia igitur magistri Thomae de Esseben fides et industria multipliciter probabta est in publicis regni negotiis, quandiu in talibus se exercet, nolumus, ut ipsum ad residentiam compellatis. . . . Certum est quod quidam domino regi sunt necessarii, quidam nobis, quidam infirmantur, quidam in scholis militant, quidam in peregrinatione sunt, quorumdam prebendae ad residentiam non sufficiunt": Ep. 135, *PL* 207, 404.

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terbury long over, he now occasionally urged his correspondents to flee secular cares and courts. One of the pro-Henry bishops of whom he had written so glowingly to Alexander III, the former royal henchman Richard of Ilchester, is portrayed in a letter to Innocent III as the antithesis of a good cleric, a man who, "ignorant of practically all literature," insisted on employing less-than-holy associates as officials.[119] Peter detested not only the bishop himself, but also the episcopal *officiales*, for they encroached on the privileges of archdeacons.[120] This particular letter concerns itself with defending the office of archdeacon, so derided by contemporaries. John of Salisbury had famously questioned whether an archdeacon could be saved, but it is clear that Peter had an idealized notion of his office.[121] According to this ideal, which may never have been truly realized, the archdeacon stood for learning and piety even when surrounded by those who cared only for profit, and Peter clung to the ideal even after years of exposure to such men. His ideals of clerical service, then, were inevitably tied to his conception of his profession and his livelihood, and even in his old age appeared with an urgency drawn from the needs of his own career.

A Literary Culture of Professional Anxiety

Through his critique of the court, Peter reacted to his own experience through the use of an existing polemical tradition. He tried to resolve the obvious contradiction between spiritual duty and worldly service by appealing to the fundamental role of the cleric as a shepherd of the people. Many of his contemporaries similarly emphasized various aspects of clerical service, and in so doing borrowed many of the same terms and images. Peter is fairly unusual, however, in incorporating a personal, confessional element in his critique, and thus his writings on the court, though they often employed conventional rhetoric, derive additional force from their spiritually charged self-examination. By presenting himself as a penitent sinner, he endowed his critique of Henry II's *curiales* with a moral urgency absent from, for example, Walter Map's *De nugis curialium*. Still, Peter's writings fit into a broad literary current stretching back centuries but unusually rich at this historical moment. He drew on imagery common in other writers and employed it, as others did, to confront the am-

119. "prorsus omnis literature ignarus": *Later Letters*, no. 8, p. 48.

120. See above, notes 103–4.

121. "Erat, ut memini, genus hominum qui in ecclesia Dei archidiaconorum censentur nomine, quibus vestra discretio omnem salutis viam querebatur esse praeclusam": John of Salisbury, *Ep.* 140, ed. Millor and Brooke, 2:25.

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biguities inherent to contemporary clerical status. The men who wrote about these ambiguities had places in the world similar to Peter's. John of Salisbury served as secretary to an archbishop of Canterbury, as Peter did, while Walter Map served in the royal court and held an archdeaconry. Gerald of Wales, also an archdeacon, shared with Peter an educational experience at Paris and a stint as personal tutor in a royal court, since he was responsible for the education of John Lackland in the 1180s. The contemporary writings of Peter the Chanter also discussed the court from the point of view of practical theology.[122] The works lumped together as "court criticism" exemplify the critiques of a social group enmeshed in social change, that is, the clergy in the years of reform leading up to the Fourth Lateran Council, but each drew on slightly different material and approached the problems from different angles.

Several scholars have pointed to disappointment as the motive for these writings. According to Egbert Türk, these clerics, with the exception of Walter Map, did not understand the potential of the Angevin court and were blind to the rich culture brewing in lay circles.[123] Instead, the critics dwelled on the barbarism of the warrior class and their own failure to achieve worldly advancement. Certainly, none of these writers had a truly successful career. Only John of Salisbury achieved episcopal rank (and not until late in life), and his reign was riddled with problems with his cathedral chapter and a general lack of administrative effectiveness. In Gerald of Wales, the disappointment is especially acute. On the first page of his autobiographical *De rebus a se gestis* he remarks how he was so thoroughly groomed for the episcopacy that his father called him "his bishop" as he grew up.[124] By the time Gerald's bid to secure the see of St. David's fails, his life story already has taken on a tragic pall. If Peter was ruined by his failure to rise above the rank of archdeacon, he did not, like Gerald, wear the tragedy on his sleeve. He expressed disappointment at losing promised prebends, prebends which, he claimed, would have allowed him to return to his native France. Like Gerald, his most powerful critique dates to later in life, but Gerald, as tutor to Prince John, was bound up with the royal court more intimately than Peter.[125] In Peter's case, personal disappointment can not be the only explanation, and John of Salisbury wrote his *Policraticus* while still essentially on the rise. The

122. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants*, 47–59.

123. Türk, *Nugae Curialium*, 195.

124. Gerald of Wales, *De rebus a se gestis* 1.1, ed. J. S. Brewer, RS 21.1 (London, 1861), 21–22.

125. On Gerald's relationship with and attitudes toward the Angevin monarchs, see Robert Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales (1146–1223)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 58–100.

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similarities in approach stem from shared literary and theological sources, along with common concerns with clerical status in the world.

From a literary point of view, it is instructive to consider the relationship between Peter of Blois and his chief literary model, Hildebert of Lavardin. I have shown in chapter 2 the extent to which Peter emulated the form and sometimes the content of Hildebert's letters in compiling his own collection. The archbishop of Tours himself appears in scholarship as a "courtly" figure largely because of his poetry. But Hildebert wrote no letter specifically confronting the problem of clerical court service, either with regard to a particular case or in the abstract. In comparison with Peter, he seldom referred to the court as a place of clerical service. He never used the term *curialis* in his letter collection, though he did refer to *aulae* and *aulici* on a few occasions. Hildebert did write several letters that Peter von Moos could describe as "allgemeine Höflichkeitsbriefe."[126] These, however, are reactions to various happenings around the court, like letters of congratulation to new bishops, and say nothing on the propriety of clerical service there.[127] Hildebert associated the court with worldly temptation, and in one letter explicitly contrasted *curia* with *ecclesia*,[128] but overall he did not dwell on the contradictions of clerical court service.

Hildebert also explored the behavior and values of laymen and ecclesiastics, particularly by cultivating a concern with *mansuetudo*, and as a result he figures prominently in the history of manners.[129] He wrote to a countess "nourished by the delights of the court" who later considered making a monastic profession. In this letter the monastery serves as a foil to the court, a contrast that is obvious and drawn with broad strokes: the recipient needs to turn herself away from the concerns at court and to follow a higher calling.[130] Peter wrote few letters to such recipients, and in general he was more concerned with the *ordo cleri* than with the customs of laymen. Peter may, however, have been influenced by Hildebert's continual warnings against ambition, which also appear in his poetry and were cited with approval by Peter's contemporary Peter the Chanter.[131] Hildebert and Peter shared a common outlook on the dangers of ambition and worldliness, but Hildebert does not seem to have provided Peter

126. von Moos, *Hildebert von Lavardin*, 51.

127. Hildebert of Lavardin, *Ep.* II.12, *PL* 171, 219–20.

128. Hildebert, *Ep.* II.52, *PL* 171, 277.

129. See, for example, Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness*, 149–50.

130. Hildebert, *Ep.* I.6, *PL* 207, 149–53.

131. Peter the Chanter, *Verbum Abbreviatum* cap. 52, ed. Monique Boutry, CCCM 196 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 344.

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with a model for discussing the court qua court, be it episcopal or royal. The archbishop of Tours's clerical experience differed markedly from that of the archdeacon of Bath, and he neither voiced the same anxieties as Peter nor displayed the same outbursts of penitence and remorse.

When Peter was a young man, John of Salisbury was a leading critic of *curiales* and clerical corruption. Like Peter, John traveled in the circles of great ecclesiastics and observed great rifts in the Church and in Church-state relations at first hand. Both wrote as humanists and clerics concerned with the dangers of the world. Peter's debt to John would be obvious had he never written him Letter 22, which ends with an admiration of *librum vestrum de nugis curialibus*.[132] Peter quoted the *Policraticus* relentlessly, often borrowing large sections without acknowledgment,[133] particularly when discussing education and in allusions to classical authors. But Letter 14, Peter's principal polemic against the royal court, did not borrow a single passage from John's corpus, and only in his later revisions to the letter do the mimes and jesters that John used to represent the worldliness of the court appear. Though many of Peter's ideas are clearly derivative—the pervasiveness of intrigue, the evils of ambition, the threat to salvation presented by the court—the letter itself has concerns different from that of *Policraticus*.

John of Salisbury placed his critique of *curiales* into a work of moral theology operating in a political context. He recognized that Becket, to whom he didicated the *Policraticus*, embodied the work's chief concern: living the Christian life when surrounded by *saecularia*. The *Policraticus* discussed the proper function of clerics in the tradition of the Gregorian reform, railing against simony and abuses of episcopal office. Ambition comes under special scrutiny. It afflicts the *curiales* sure enough, but it also infects the entire body politic through the person of the king, should he not conform to the proper divine principles. Peter's concerns, in Letter 14 and elsewhere, are far narrower: his emphasis is on how clerics as men of God operate in the world, and he goes little further. He drew on the same strands of thought, however. In Letter 6, the defense of the clerics of Canterbury, Peter employed attacks on scholars bogged down in grammatical trivialities in defending himself against the sort of charges made in the *Policraticus*. For John, the debate over *curiales* was also one over education. Indeed, as Hans Liebescühtz has cogently argued, John may well have intended his *Metalogicon* and *Policraticus* as sections of a single

132. *Ep.* 22, *PL* 207, 82.
133. Philippe Delhaye, "Un témoignage frauduleux," 329–31.

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large book.[134] John did not believe that *curiales* always made good *philosophi*. Peter also recognized this when he argued in Letter 14 that the lesser educated might be the more suitable servants for the king. Although John sometimes used the first person plural, and spoke as a firsthand witness, his writings on the court do not have the same personal quality as Peter's short exhortations to proper behavior. For Peter, the troubles of the court were not so much "trifles" but clear and present dangers to the soul, and he had little interest in making light of them. While John, taking a broader view and observing with a subtler mind, could place the court within a larger moral frame, Peter reported the miseries of clerical court service as the immediate daily threats to health and soul. For Peter these hardships were not frivolities to be dismissed, but grave threats that could be confronted with *caritas*. John and Peter shared similar assumptions, owing to their common educational background and near-identical positions in the archiepiscopal household of Canterbury. Both presented themselves essentially as religious moralists, but the epistolary genre allowed Peter to present the threats to the soul at court as more immediately perilous, with a more personal angle.

John of Salisbury, of course, even though he did not achieve a bishopric until late in life, ranks as one of the more prominent churchmen of the twelfth century, while Peter remained in relative obscurity. Also obscure is the life of another court critic, John de Hautville, who like Peter, his nearly exact contemporary, held a canonry at Rouen and corresponded with Walter of Coutances. John dedicated his satirical poem *Architrenius* (The Archweeper) to Walter on the occasion of his elevation to the archbishopric of Rouen in 1184, a year after Peter wrote a letter in Walter's name. Almost nothing of John's life is known, except that he was a *magister* at Rouen in the waning years of the twelfth century. The *Architrenius* tells an ethical tale of a young clerk who wastes his days living raucously and who travels to the schools of Paris and the courts of the great.[135] Like Peter, John de Hauteville attacks ambition and avarice; at times the work becomes for all intents and purposes a catalogue of earthly vice. It was not John's primary purpose to criticize the court; his attack on episcopal servants is almost an aside. Many elements of the clerical dilemma important in Peter's letters, however, appear in this poem, including the ubiquitous remorse and disappointment of the school-trained clergy, and

134. Hans Liebeschütz, *Mediaeval Humanism in the Life and Writings of John of Salisbury*, Studies of the Warburg Institute 17 (London: Warburg Institute, 1950), 21.

135. See above, chapter 3, note 24.

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the inverse relationship between effort and morality, on the one hand, and success, on the other. The *Architrenius* takes many twists, and digresses often into a morass of classical allusions far more developed than any found in Peter's letters. Compared to John's poem, which reads like the musings of a man indulging in literary *otium*, Peter's letters come across as the work of a concerned professional confronting imminent threats. While Peter professes to bring to light his own miseries and occasionally to justify his own actions, John wishes to warn his patron of the dangers he faces. The greed and avarice of an archbishop's underlings could well undo him.[136] What is missing from John's poem, however, is a true exposition of the clerical dilemma, of serving God in the world. The ethical concerns do not acquire the additional weight that Peter's repeated assertions of pastoral obligation lend to his letters. The miseries of the clerical intellectuals as described in the *Architrenius* are in the main practical concerns—poor food, lack of sleep, professional uncertainty—denuded of the weight of guilt that pervaded Peter's writings.

Another contemporary, Walter Map, aimed his *De nugis curialium* at a broad range of satirical targets: avaricious monks, fawning courtiers, heretics, incompetent bishops, and others, all set within a collection of moral fables and bawdy tales. The *De nugis* rollicks through huge tracts of social territory to roast anyone whose behavior can be ridiculed or subjected to moral scrutiny, while Peter tended to paint with smaller strokes, revealing the inner conflict of a cleric in the world. Walter draws on imagery also favored by Peter: he tells the entire tale of the knights of Herla, the *milites Herlikini*, to whom Peter had compared Henry's *curiales*.[137] As a work of satire, the *De nugis* has few equals. But Walter wrote from a different point of view. Although he never became a bishop, he seems to have had an adequate household of his own.[138] Moreover, his choice of genre, a verse satire, precludes some of the biting self-examination that gives Peter's letters so much of their force.

To find another writer of the period who saw the court as a source of immediate danger to the soul and a place where clerics forgot their proper callings, one need only look to Peter's bitter adversaries, the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury. One of their number, Nigel de Longchamps (sometimes called Nigel Wireker), made two of the most significant contributions to twelfth-century criticism of the secular clergy: the *Speculum stultorum* and the *Tractatus contra clericos curiales*. Although neither re-

136. *Architrenius*, 3.

137. See above, note 80.

138. See Brooke and Mynor, introduction to *De nugis curialium*.

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ferred directly to the other in their writings, Peter and Nigel almost certainly crossed paths at Canterbury. Peter stayed there throughout Richard and Baldwin's rule (1174–1190), and Nigel is believed to have joined Christ Church in 1170 and stayed there until his death well into the next century.[139] It also seems probable that Nigel read Peter of Blois's apology to Christ Church after he had finished playing his part in the affair. The pair also shared at least two contacts within the high clergy: William de Longchamps, later bishop of Ely and chancellor of Richard Lionheart, and Reginald of Salisbury, bishop of Bath. The latter presided over the see in which Peter was archdeacon and had provided him with support in the past, and became a fervent partisan of Christ Church's case against Baldwin.[140] There would have been plenty of time for the two to become aware of each other in this tense environment, and it is not implausible to suppose that Peter was one of those clerks from whom Nigel gained his perceptions of the secular clergy. Nigel then turned these perceptions into satire in the *Speculum stultorum* sometime in late 1179 or early 1180.[141]

The *Speculum* represents one of the most successful Latin satires of the period, and picks off a range of targets. The heart of the piece is the story of Burnellus the ass, who, dissatisfied with his natural condition as an ass with large ears, yearns for a longer tail. After Galen the physician is unable to dissuade him and his subsequent trip to Salerno fails to procure the desired physical change, he makes up his mind to win fame through theological disputation at Paris, where he fails miserably. He then seeks a monastic solution to his dilemma, but when none of the contemporary orders are pure enough for him (and Nigel is sure to satirize all of them), he sets off to found his own order. This too, does not work out for poor Burnellus, and the end of the poem leaves him in a condition not unlike his original one, save for his considerable disappointment. The *Speculum*, which Nigel himself explicated in a later letter to William de Longchamps, thus attacks the educational and spiritual pretension of contemporary clerics.[142] According to Nigel, Burnellus at the beginning represents any malcontent "monk or religious" at the mercy of his own ambition.[143] In the course of the story, Nigel lampoons Par-

139. See above, chapter 1; for Nigel, see Mozley and Raymo, introduction to *Speculum stultorum*, 1.

140. Stubbs, introduction to *Epistolae Cantuarienses*, lxxxvi.

141. For the date, see A. Boutemy, "Sur le 'prologue en prose' et la date du *Speculum Stultorum*," *Revue de la Université de Bruxelles* (1934): 67–90.

142. The letter is printed in *Anglo-Latin Satirical Poets and Epigrammatists of the Twelfth Century*, vol. 1, ed. T. Wright, Rolls Series 59.1 (London, 1872), 3–10.

143. Ibid., 4.

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is, worldly monks, and school-trained clergy, and so reacts to the social change sweeping through twelfth-century Europe.

While the *Speculum* serves to mock the grand array of human folly and pretension, it also provides a catalogue of options, an encomium of the choices available for spiritual expression and career advancement. Burnellus leaves his original monastic condition, in Nigel's view the proper one, for the life of scholarship and careerism associated with the secular clergy, but ultimately finds only disappointment. In the course of his attacks on the various religious orders, Nigel comes to secular canons, clergy drawing income from churches but without a monastic rule or even clearly defined obligations. Their fundamental characteristics are ambition and greed, and they flail about miserably for any promotion as they disgrace the Church:

> Through them the respect of the clergy withers and dies, and the honor of the religious life is reduced to nothing. By their counsel kings conceive iniquities, and they hold loosely what they ought to bind. They are the companions of priests and the left hands of kings, with wandering foot, deceitful tongue, a twisted hand, duplicitous heart, specious love, a name without holiness, a hidden wrath, true disturbance and false quiet, an empty purse . . . law without the law of God, a canon without the canon of Christ, the leading cause of evil, and a page filled with grief.[144]

In this sweeping condemnation Nigel points out most of the predominant characteristics of the secular canons, such as their need for employment and income, literary and legal training, as well as charges of vanity and craftiness. Taken along with the rest of the poem, it becomes clear that he regarded clerks as shifty, vain, ambitious, greedy, and ultimately foolish and irreligious.

It is quite possible that Nigel formed these impressions based on his experience with the archiepiscopal curia at Canterbury. The clerks who worked for the archbishops had long annoyed the monastic chapter of Christ Church, including the retinue of Thomas Becket and Theobald before him.[145] Like Peter, Nigel expressed an overriding concern with episcopal and pastoral duty, though he sees secular service as utterly irreconcilable with the clerical order. His writings make no appeal to ideal priests shepherding rulers, and show no interest whatever in affirming the value of educated clerics at the episcopal court. Throughout the tract

144. *Speculum Stultorum*, ed. Mozley and Raymo, 83.

145. See R. W. Southern, *The Monks of Canterbury and the Murder of Archbishop Becket* (Canterbury: Friends of Canterbury Cathedral and the William Urry Memorial Trust, 1985).

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he adopts an unapologetically adversarial stance toward clerical court service, in which the dilemma of Becket, the choice between chancellor and bishop, becomes the dilemma of William de Longchamps. Becket realized it was not possible to be both (as did most other cleric-chancellors of the period) and Nigel urges William, who has "two men" within him,[146] to choose likewise. The secular half of the bishop is an impostor, so he needs to be *contentus conditione tua*.

To support his case, Nigel points to the courtly clerics as evidence of broader corruption in the Church. In a series of passages heavily dependent on John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, these churchmen represent those who choose wickedness for the sake of their own ambition.[147] There is perhaps a vague shadow of Peter of Blois in Nigel's caricature of hangers-on who hope for promotion from their bishops, first to archdeaconries and then to bishoprics. We cannot know if Peter himself so shamelessly sought such promotion—there is some evidence he did not—but he was certainly at the right place at the right time to be one of Nigel's targets. None of this is to argue that Nigel in fact meant to portray Peter himself, but that Peter's world was the world of the *Speculum* and the *Tractatus*. Like the ass in the *Speculum*, however, the clerics of the *Tractatus* are inevitably disappointed. The disillusionment that Egbert Türk believes set the tone for courtly criticism here appears from a figure outside the court who felt no disappointment save that caused by the attacks of the *curiales* on his Church. His complaint that "if you give out greater amounts [of money at court], it will surely give a pittance back to you" closely resembles Peter of Blois comment that "he who loves more is loved less." Peter gave this somewhat standard appraisal of courtly life a personal edge. In the wake of his departure from court, which Nigel considered inevitable for most clerics, Peter presented himself as a penitent sinner. He also apologized profusely to the Canterbury monks for his participation in the case over Hackington.

Could Nigel and the other monks have accepted either of these apologies? Perhaps, but Nigel was profoundly suspicious of the penitent displays of the secular clergy. Burnellus the Ass's turn to religion, it should be recalled, was a blatant attempt to find another outlet for his ambition. Years later in the *Tractatus*, he made light of the penchant of clerics for apologizing, convinced that they will "fall into a more severe lapse and descend even lower."[148] Nigel thus cut off Peter's escape route, and made

146. Nigel de Longchamps, *Tractatus contra curiales et officiales clericos*, ed. A. Boutemy, 150.
147. Ibid., 170ff.
148. "ut lapsu graviore ruant, descendunt inferius": *Tractatus*, 170.

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it clear that the secular clergy's shiftiness was a moral failing. For Peter and others, however, it was a professional and spiritual dilemma, and the wide variations in his literary treatment of the dilemma graphically illustrate its impact on the members of the middle clergy.

That Peter could approach the court, and clerical status in general, from so many angles suggests that these were multifarious concepts with no coherent theory behind them. Peter could draw from several ideological traditions to discuss the court, and his treatment of it shows that ultimately the court occupied an ambiguous position in the political culture of the time, standing at the border of several ideals. J. E. A. Jolliffe, discussing the lack of a firm conception of Angevin kingship, has argued that the schools of the day "were not poor in ideas about monarchy," but that none of these "could be made the working principle of a state."[149] Courtly service, intimately interwoven with Angevin kingship, similarly had no single guiding premise. The schools, along with recent polemical literature and the tradition of Church councils had left a number of ideas that could be used to discuss the court, and especially the place of churchmen in it. As a cleric, courtier and master, Peter was heir to all these ideas.

Peter's concern with learning and education underlies most of his discussions of clerical duty. Southern and Ferruolo have argued that he was not competent to serve in a royal administration concerned with keeping accounts and with technical legal matters.[150] Archbishop Baldwin, on the other hand, thought Peter was up to the task of pleading an ecclesiastical case, and the monks of Christ Church saw him as a dangerous adversary. Peter could probably hold his own intellectually with other ecclesiastics. Furthermore, his education was not significantly different from that of any of the Paris masters who went on to prominent positions in the Church and the world. While the late twelfth century did see the decline of traditional liberal learning in the face of Scholasticism, Peter was in fact trained in the current theology and law.

At any rate, his fellow litterati embraced him as one of their own, at least on occasion. Gerald of Wales described Peter as very much a representative learned clerk who stood in marked contrast to the accountants and notaries who ran the royal administration. On one occasion, Gerald and Peter were apparently in the entourage of Hubert Walter, possibly in Normandy, on the feast of the Holy Trinity, when Peter gave a sermon.

149. J. E. A. Jolliffe, *Angevin Kingship*, 2nd ed. (London, 1963), 19.
150. Feruolo, 166; Southern, "Medieval Humanism," 127.

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It happened that on the feast of the Holy Trinity, the duty of preaching fell to Master Peter of Blois, the archdeacon of London. When he had done it and finished his Catholic sermon, the archbishop applauded, and as if to praise the sermon, said: "Whence is it that today, Master, you have invigorated us, and by splendidly discussing the properties of the three persons of the Trinity, you have clearly and excellently taught us that Our Lord Jesus Christ is Father and Son and Holy Spirit?" But he, hiding his face in embarrassment, did not respond. The speech, however, spoken in that audience, caused some to blush and be embarrassed, but others, unable to hide it, smiled.[151]

As the clerks tittered around him, Peter had to mind his tongue. Peter passed some kind of test for Gerald, exposing the ignorance of those who rose to the positions neither of them attained. The school-trained know-it-alls tried to have the last laugh.

Gerald and Peter's sense of pastoral duty depended on an ideal of the *clericus litteratus*. Although twelfth-century laymen were literate in larger numbers than is generally assumed, the ideal litterati, as Peter's writings make amply clear, were still clergy.[152] Yet the new style of administration, whose transgressions against morality Peter described in stark detail, had shown that the new governments and its administrative class could be anything but ideal. The texts suggest that Peter took for granted the presence of clerics at different kinds of courts, and understood this task to include not only counseling great men, but also attending to minor matters of business where the temptation to enter wholeheartedly into *negotia* and *secularia* arose. He brought together all aspects of clerical duty in his corpus in order to determine where he stood in this dynamic world of professional opportunity and spiritual pressure, just as the Church was working out the role of the pastor in its ecclesiology prior to Lateran IV.[153] For Peter of Blois the problem of the court lay in finding a clear, spiritually acceptable ideal that could account for his participation in twelfth-century clerical culture.

151. "Ad haec etiam accidit ut in festo S. Trinitatis archidiaconi Londinensi magistro Petro Blesensi officium praedicationis injungeret. Quo facto, et sermone catholice completo, archiepiscopus ipse applaudens et sermonem quasi commendans, ait: 'Unde nos hodie, magister, refecisti, et de trium personarum proprietatibus egregie disserendo aperte et bene docuisti, quod Jesus Christus dominus noster est Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus": Gerald of Wales, *De invectionibus* 1.5, ed. J. S. Brewer, RS 21.3 (London, 1872), 31.

152. Turner, "*Miles Litteratus*—How Rare a Phenomenon?" in *Judges, Administrators and the Common Law in Angevin England*, 119–36.

153. Leonard E. Boyle, "The Inter-Conciliar Period 1179–1215 and the Beginnings of Pastoral Manuals," in *Miscellanea Rolando Bandinelli Papa Alessandro III*, ed. Filippo Liotta (Siena, 1986), 43–56.

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Catholic University of America Press

Chapter Title: In Search of the Ideal Bishop

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma
Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century
Book Author(s): John D. Cotts
Published by: Catholic University of America Press. (2009)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.10

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5 *In Search of the Ideal Bishop*

Over the course of his career in the ecclesiastical courts of Normandy and England, Peter of Blois found himself ideally positioned to observe the successes and failures of the Church's leaders. He arrived in Normandy during the culminating years of the Becket controversy, and corresponded with (and sought the patronage of) several major players in the dispute who would shape the future of the clergy as the dust cleared. Soon after Henry II did penance at Avranches and the pope absolved him of his role in Becket's death, Peter came to England and for two decades watched as a kind of normalcy returned, with all concerned wishing to avoid further ideological strife. The election of Richard of Dover, a relatively uncontroversial choice, to Canterbury in 1173 epitomized the period's pervasive antipathy toward further quarreling.[1] Within this climate of exhaustion and uncertainty, Peter of Blois could appreciate both the idealism of the reformers and the practical efficiency of Angevin administration. Drawing on various traditions of thought on Church-state relations, he outlined the proper relationship between clergy and administration in terms that recognized the difficult position of the Anglo-Norman church under the Angevins.

Like Richard of Dover, in whose household he served for a decade, Peter steered clear of controversy, and encouraged spiritual reform of the clergy through a monastic-ascetic program very much

1. For general accounts of the ecclesiastical history of this period, see Henry Mayr-Harting, "Henry II and the Papacy 1170–1189"; Raymonde Foreville, *L'église et la royauté en Angleterre sous Henri II Plantagenet (1154–1189)* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1943), esp. 327–564; W. L. Warren, *Henry II*; C. R. Cheney, *From Becket to Langton: English Church Government 1170–1213* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1956); and David Walker, "Crown and Episcopacy under the Normans and Angevins," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 5 (1982): 221–33.

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in line with the thought of Bernard of Clairvaux and other reformers. His program for episcopal duty transcended his personal loyalties, but also reflected his position in a complex web of ecclesiastical politics. Although he never became a bishop himself, Peter took a keen interest in the episcopacy and how it should serve its king and protect its people.

Peter's letters of exhortation, admonition, and rebuke to English, Norman, and French bishops present the problem of authority most clearly of all his writings. What is (and was) one to make of the spiritual warnings issued by an oft-frustrated archdeacon to some of the most important men in the Church? It seems little short of impudent presumption for Peter to remind England's highest-ranking ecclesiastics of their obligations. He clearly felt a compelling need both to encourage reform and to represent himself as in tune with the ideas of the great reformers. John of Salisbury usually reserved barbed or indignant letters for his equals, or else wrote them on behalf of Archbishop Theobald, while Peter, who had no major office or universally recognized sanctity to add severity to his words, imparted spiritual urgency to his letters by alluding to Scripture and reiterating the tenets of ecclesiastical reform. Making liberal use of both biblical citations and the ideas of the schools, Peter wrote as *magister* and *minister* to his flock, that is, his audience.[2]

Although Peter attached himself to some of Becket's opponents early in his career, his writings on clerical and episcopal duties never coalesced into a running polemic for a particular party. He did assume the standard distinction between *regnum* and *sacerdotium* that had made its way, with modifications, from Gelasius to Gregorian polemic to canon law collections. As he did when discussing clerical court service, Peter outlined a practical theology for the good Christian shepherd, expressing antagonisms in terms of dangers to the soul rather than competing institutions or theories. This focus on the personal, rather than the political, aspects of episcopal duty may be to some degree a product of twelfth-century England's complex ecclesiastical politics. W. L. Warren argued that the Becket conflict itself is ultimately most easily comprehensible as a clash of personalities rather than an irreconcilable difference of theological ideals.[3] Charles Duggan, among others, countered that Becket viewed

2. For the Scholastic ideals that influenced this discourse, see Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants*, 1:161–74; and Buc, *L'ambiguité du livre*.

3. Warren, *Henry II*, 517: "Yet it was the manner of Becket's opposition rather than its ideological content which caused the implacable hostility of the king. . . . For [Henry], the conflict remained, as it had begun, a conflict of personalities set on a collision course from which neither could retreat without an unthinkable loss of prestige."

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the conflict through the lens of solid theological and legal ideas, which were far more significant to him than personal animosity toward his king and former friend.[4] Anne Duggan has shown that Becket and his followers constructed a sophisticated ideological apparatus from biblical and patristic sources, and many members of the English episcopacy, on both sides of the debate, saw the conflict in terms of ideals that could not be compromised.[5] When considering the English clergy, however, one would be hard-pressed to identify alliances based on clear political or theological positions; such alliances as existed defy classification by ideological rubric. Becket counted "Gregorians" like Gilbert Foliot among his most bitter critics and occasionally may have offended clerics more by his coarseness than by his ideals.[6] The English episcopate in the 1160s and 1170s saw frequently shifting alliances amid alternating periods of unanimity and splintering, without political "parties" identifiable by their adherence to a particular theory. The language of ecclesiastical liberty appeared frequently in the correspondence surrounding the dispute, and some bishops were seen as enemies of freedom, but most of the ecclesiastical actors in the drama agreed over basic principles, and with a few notable exceptions displayed an almost uniform desire for compromise. Peter, for his part, did not need to write for a party; he placed the arena of conflict in the soul of his recipients rather than between adherents of conflicting views of Church power.

The ambiguities and contradictions of the Becket controversy persisted into the 1170s, and Peter's writings bear witness to them. Throughout the culminating years of the dispute he had associated and corresponded with both friends and enemies of Becket. On several occasions Peter invoked the martyr's memory as a glorious defender of the Church, but he also wrote a letter on behalf of Archbishop Richard that effectively contradicted Becket's position on the all-important matter of criminous clerks. He served Becket's first three successors as they attempted

4. Charles Duggan, "The Becket Dispute and the Criminous Clerks," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 35 (1962): 1–31.

5. Anne Duggan, *Thomas Becket* (London: Arnold, 2004), esp. 113–17, and "John of Salisbury and Thomas Becket," in *The World of John of Salisbury*, 428–29. See also the recent discussion in Martin Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire 1154–1224*, trans. David Crouch (Harlow, U.K.: Pearson, 2007), 222–33.

6. On Gilbert's ideas on church and state, see Adrian Morey and C. N. L. Brooke, *Gilbert Foliot and His Letters*, esp. 174–87; for Becket's periodic alienation of the episcopacy, see, in addition to Warren, Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, esp. 109–16, 165, 186; David Knowles, *The Episcopal Colleagues of Archbishop Thomas Becket* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951); and Schriber, *The Dilemma of Arnulf of Lisieux*, 105–8. See also J. W. Alexander, "The Becket Controversy in Recent Historiography," *Journal of British Studies* 9 (1970): 6–7.

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to come to terms with his legacy. Meanwhile, as Henry II worked to mitigate the damage of the humiliations consequent to the murder, the English church followed contemporary ecclesiastical currents. Within a context of increased papal jurisdiction, aggressive collection of decretals, and general interest in canon law, and relative archiepiscopal cooperation with the king, Peter presented his prescriptions on episcopal obligations. He offered a sensitive clerical reaction to the Becket controversy, and his relationship with two archbishops of Canterbury make his construction of an episcopal ideal especially intriguing. This strand of Peter's thought achieved its clearest expression in his treatise *Canon episcopalis*, completed in the late 1190s. Because of his career in archiepiscopal households, Peter became an interested witness to the interaction of authority and spirituality among the highest-ranking figures in the Church, and ultimately arrived at a precariously balanced synthesis of traditional ideas of sacerdotal authority and a cleric's basic obligations to guide his flock.

The Becket Conflict and Peter of Blois's Letters

Some of the earliest letters in Peter's letter collection date to the late 1160s, at which time the dispute between Thomas Becket and Henry II advanced inevitably toward its dénouement. In 1168–1169, Peter returned from Sicily to France, whence he moved to Normandy, where he remained until 1173 or 1174. His precise whereabouts and activities, however, are unknown.[7] Significantly, his entrance into the world of Anglo-Norman ecclesiastical affairs nearly coincided with Becket's martyrdom. Archbishop Thomas still cast a long shadow in the 1180s, as Peter assembled the early versions of his letter collection, and direct allusions to the martyr appear on a dozen or so occasions in his letters and treatises. Certainly Peter associated with bishops who could be counted enemies of Becket, namely, Jocelin of Salisbury, Jocelin's son Reginald who would be raised to the see of Bath in 1173, and Rotrou of Rouen. That Reginald had once been one of Becket's clerks demonstrates even further the complexity of ecclesiastical alliances.[8] The clerical power relations surrounding the Becket conflict are difficult to trace and shifted depending on the circumstances, though Gilbert Foliot, Hilary of Chichester, and Roger of York seem to have formed a durable nucleus of opposition to the archbishop.[9] Jocelin sided with Becket at the council of Northampton but

7. See above, chapter 1.
8. Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 107.
9. Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 115; Knowles, *Episcopal Colleagues*, passim.

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then participated, against Becket's wishes, in the coronation of Henry the Young King in 1170.[10] The controversy similarly conditioned the writing and collecting of letters, as illustrated by those of Arnulf of Lisieux. Arnulf's letters show him to be in sympathy with Becket, if decidedly annoyed at his actions; it is only after the martyrdom that Arnulf's letters enthusiastically support him.[11] Other prominent figures closely associated with the archbishop and his cause, such as John of Salisbury and Bartholomew of Exeter, experienced doubts over Becket's behavior, the latter incurring a suspension in 1170. Bartholomew certainly believed in clerical immunity and supported Becket on the other relevant issues, but opposed him in councils while serving as the king's delegate.[12]

Peter faced similar difficulties, both as a cleric and as a writer. Few churchmen could resist the wave of adulation directed at the most popular new saint in western Christendom, whose successor at Canterbury was his new employer. Peter would be troubled, indirectly, by the martyr's posthumous power when he prosecuted the legal case against the monks of Christ Church, who had adopted Becket the saint as a patron of their house, and who criticized Peter's behavior in the *Epistolae Cantuarienses*. When he recounted his version of the dispute, Peter argued that Becket himself had supported the plan to place a collegiate church in the Canterbury suburbs, long before Peter advanced that cause on Archbishop Baldwin's behalf.[13] Clearly, Becket's memory was as versatile as it was powerful. Peter was careful to present him as a symbol of suffering for the faith and as a powerful saintly intercessor.

When Peter compiled his letters in the 1180s, the Becket conflict still mattered. He included in his collection a letter dealing with the events of 1168–1169, addressed to John of Salisbury during one of the latter's exiles from England.[14] Peter worked the letter into its final form well after 1170, and he gives several indications of writing with benefit of hindsight. He repeatedly predicted Becket's undying fame and explicitly looked forward to a *finis gloriosus* and *beatitudo interminabilis*.[15]

Toward the end of the letter he added a fragment of biographical information about his own involvement with the papal legates charged with

10. Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 112, 206, 216, 221–22.

11. *The Letter Collections of Arnulf of Lisieux*, trans. Schriber, 86–87, 158–71, 194–95, 216–20.

12. For John, see above, note 5; on Bartholomew, see Adrian Morey, *Bartholomew of Exeter, Bishop and Canonist: A Study in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 15–30.

13. *Later Letters*, no. 10, p. 57.

14. This letter appears as no. 675 in *MTB*. The following letters in that anthology are also from Peter's collection: nos. 782, 791, 794, 800, 802, 806.

15. *Ep.* 22, *PL* 207, 78.

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settling the conflict, and this has rendered the dating and interpretation of the piece extremely difficult: "Through the legates of the apostolic see," he wrote, "whom I accompanied as far as Bologna, [Becket] will either be soon reconciled to the king of England or transferred to the eminence of a greater patriarchate."[16] The main papal legates during the late 1160s were the papal notary Gratian and Vivian, archdeacon of Orvieto, who went to Normandy by way of Sens in 1169.[17] Yet it would be somewhat odd for Peter to present their journey out of Rome as recent news, since he earlier in the piece had referred to the coronation of the Young King, which took place in July of 1170. It has been suggested that Peter meant Otto and William of Pavia, who attempted to revolve the dispute in 1167. This is an attractive suggestion, since Peter definitely stayed with William in 1168–1169, and it was William of Pavia who initially proposed Becket's translation to another see than Canterbury.[18] Still, William's legatine activities were even further removed in time when Peter ostensibly told John of Salisbury about them. Peter's sometime employer, Rotrou of Rouen, was himself a legate in 1170, but was not in Rome and so could not have traveled to Bologna with him.[19] E. S. Cohn argued that he had in mind William of the White Hands, archbishop of Sens, who delivered the papal commission of legatine duties to Rotrou in 1170.[20] Because Peter's own itinerary is not clear, this matter will never be satisfactorily resolved. He would have been on his way back to France from Sicily in late 1168 or early 1169, and could have thus gone from Rome to Bologna with a number of papal legates or nuncios. He may have been back in Italy to accompany William of the White Hands in 1170, but this is entirely conjecture. He may well have altered the content of the letter before compiling and circulating it. He may also have added allusions to events of 1167–1169 to the letter in order to show his own (albeit indirect) involvement with one of a number of attempts at resolving the crisis, or to provide additional historical context to his readers. The disparate events recounted in the letter strongly support Cohn's claim that the reliability of this piece in matters of fact suffers from additions made by Peter when his assembled his letter collection.[21] Peter's attempt to place himself un-

16. "per legatos sedis apostolicae, cum quibus a Romana curia usque ad Bononiam veni, vel Anglorum regi in proximo firmissime reconciliabitur, vel ad majoris patriarchatus emminentiam transferetur": *Ep.* 27, *PL* 207, 81.

17. Eyton, *Court, Household, and Itinerary*, 123; Barlow, *Thomas Beckett*, 183, 192–93.

18. See Robinson, "Peter of Blois," 105.

19. Eyton, *Court, Household, and Itinerary*, 125–31, 141–47.

20. E. S. Cohn, "The Manuscript Evidence," 59–60.

21. Ibid.; Robinson, "Peter of Blois," 105. Robinson also argues that the "chronological difficulty" stems from reediting.

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ambiguously on the right side of the issue in the aftermath may have led him to rewrite his narrative.

All that can be known for certain, then, is that this letter, with its references to the archbishop's exile, purports to belong to the period 1169–1170, when Peter had some connection to Jocelin, Reginald, and Rotrou; however, Peter certainly modified it, so it is a better guide to how Peter manipulated Becket's sanctity later in his career than to the history of the martyr's final months. Becket had suspended Jocelin and complained bitterly to Rotrou about the frequency with which suspended English bishops sought haven in Normandy.[22] As Becket's hostility toward these clerics heightened, writing a letter of encouragement to Becket and his close friend John may have been a daunting task for Peter. Although he managed to produce a subtly mild rebuke of the most important figure in the English church, one may fairly suspect that he played the ends against the middle. He certainly needed to balance his loyalty toward certain members of the episcopacy with his fundamental agreement with the principle of ecclesiastical liberty, and in this respect he was largely successful. The letter first shows his proficiency at walking a thin line with his commendation of Becket's use of suspension as a weapon against his enemies, since many of Peter's own intimates had received that sanction:

> And so I congratulate you for turning justice into judgment by punishing through excommunication the rebellion and defiance of certain men, so long as you do this by dint of reason and justice, not fervor for revenge or desire to injure others. I ask that you do nothing from anger or hatred, but let everything you do be done in charity [1 Cor. 16:13], for you will not reap the harvest of salvation from this persecution, unless your whole intention proceeds wholly from the depth of charity.[23]

With discomfiting presumption, Peter echoes the common insinuation that Becket acted in a vain and petty manner, with an unmistakable hint of rebuke. By indirectly questioning the future martyr's motives, he tries to temper the archbishop's anger through Christian charity; he would later do the same to Henry II in a dialogue dedicated to the monarch.[24] The recent excommunications may have informed his insistence on leniency as an episcopal virtue:

> The soul of him who prepares himself to endure persecution should first be soothed with the oil of charity, so that he does not lack charity in adversity, and

22. *The Correspondence of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1162–1170*, ed. Anne Duggan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 2:870–73.

23. *Ep.* 22, 78–79.

24. See below, chapter 6.

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he does not burn with hatred for his brother or zeal for revenge. It is therefore of greater value to you, and commendable among God and men, if you restrain the disobedience of your subjects with the a view to justice. . . . When one renders justice there should be no consideration of persons or favorites. If he should be a brother or a son, a prelate or a subject, the fruit of justice should always be sought, and those who judge the earth [Ps. 9:9] should always judge justly.[25]

Becket's opponents almost universally complained that through intransigence and vanity he threatened the peace and unity of the Church.[26] As a corrective to the archbishop's zeal, Peter appeals to Christian love as the best guiding principle for those who suffer persecution. The middle third of Peter's letter moves from exhortation to admonition, from agreement in theory with Becket's cause to discomfort with Becket's manner of proceeding against Henry. Given that Peter's patrons and employers in the early 1170s had often endured strained relationships with Becket, these concerns must have been close to Peter's heart.

He also needed to wrestle with difficult matter of the recent coronation of Henry the Young King, carried out by the archbishop of York against Becket's vehement objections. This brought forth a wave of suspensions from the archbishop (who had only recently returned from exile).[27] Peter carefully avoids comment on the propriety of the coronation and emphasizes the archbishop's responsibility to restrain his anger, and John of Salisbury's duty to mollify him:

It is said that on account of the coronation of the new king of England by the archbishop of York, and on account of certain privileges, so they say, that were secretly obtained against him, he [Becket] has been stirred to anger. . . . You, however, who are the hand of the archbishop, and his eyes, comfort his unsteady hands with your holy exhortations, and give strength to his weakened knees. It is no wonder if he is angered by his trials and pressures. Nonetheless, if he wholly depends on and adheres to Him who sends out roots among his elect [Eccli. 24: 13] let him confidently set aside every gust of temptation or care.[28]

25. *Ep.* 22, 79.

26. The most powerful expression of this belief is Gilbert Foliot's *Multiplicem,* found in Adrian Morey and C. N. L. Brooke, eds., *The Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 229–43. For analysis, see Morey and Brooke, *Gilbert Foliot and His Letters,* 168–87.

27. Barlow, *Thomas Beckett,* 216; Warren, *Henry II,* 507.

28. "dicitur tamen quod propter coronationem novi regis Anglorum ab Eboracensi factam, atque ob quaedam privilegia, sicut dicunt contra ipsum subrepitie impetrata, adeo turbatus est . . . Verumtamen vos, qui estis manus archiepiscopi et oculus eius, sanctis exhortationibus vestris confortate manus dissolutas, et genua debilia roborate. Non est mirum, si turbetur tribulationibus et pressuris; verumtamen, si totus innitatur et inhaereat ei, qui in electis suis mittit radices, omnem ventum tentationis et turbinis securus excipiet": *Ep.* 22, 80.

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The portrayal of Becket here is not especially flattering, but Peter may have known (in 1170 as well as when the letter was compiled) that John's own patience was wearing thin, since he had tried to reconcile Jocelin and Reginald to him.[29] After conventional praise of Becket as a defender of the Church, Peter moves on to prescribe mildness for bishops, lightly censuring this archbishop while trying to agree with him in principle. Many contemporaries, including Peter's own correspondent Arnulf of Lisieux, took this route.[30] Peter himself, who was not yet an archdeacon, would have been somewhat bold to presume, in what was certainly in part a public letter, to rebuke one of the most famous men in all of Christendom. In the context of his letter collection the piece underscores a common theme: the value of mildness and justice, informed by the demands of Christian love, *caritas*. Not even the martyred defender of the Church escaped such reproach. Although he may have appeared presumptuous, even impudent, Peter clearly saw himself as a reformer who could preserve peace and order, and check clerical arrogance.

However, this letter to John takes yet another turn. The final sentences praise Becket enthusiastically and confidently predict that *gloriosus erit sui certaminis cursus*.[31] Peter navigated a middle course, encouraging struggle *pro libertate ecclesiae* without compromising his loyalty to men like Reginald who ran foul of the archbishop. His solution to his dilemma was to invoke the episcopal virtues of mildness and patience, and to encourage Becket by way of rebuke, as John of Salisbury himself did, although in much milder fashion.[32] John's position, however, remained extraordinarily complicated during the dispute, so it is significant that Peter should have addressed this piece to him. Becket's former *curialis* faced real danger from the king, and his relationship with the archbishop must, as Anne Duggan has shown, be viewed in the context of John's search for a "diplomatic way out of an impasse." John wavered not at all in his commitment to clerical immunity and would not swear an oath to honor the Constitutions of Clarendon.[33] While John defended Reginald of Salisbury and royal *curiales* like the notorious Richard of Ilchester, he probably did so for the sake of diplomacy, and like Peter he agreed in principle with Becket's use of suspension and excommunication.[34] Peter recognized John's dilemma: not

29. John of Salisbury, *Epp.* 217, 218, 278, ed. Millor and Brooke, 2:362–71, 598–601.
30. See above, note 11.
31. *Ep.* 22, 81.
32. See John of Salisbury, *Epp.* 228, 301, ed. Millor and Brooke, vol. 2, 401, 709.
33. Anne Duggan, "John of Salisbury and Thomas Becket," 431.
34. Ibid., 434.

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only did he beg Becket to be mild but he made sure to console John on the confiscation of his property by the king.[35]

Another letter in the collection, addressed to the archbishop's *familiares*, defended the suspended Reginald of Salisbury and explained Peter's admiration for Reginald as he begged pardon for the latter's perceived offenses.[36] Peter could not separate the effects of the Becket conflict from his own career and his dependence on patrons and employers. This dilemma afflicted other clerics as well, though Peter did not seem to have had to answer to the king at this time, as bishops like Arnulf of Lisieux and Bartholomew of Exeter did. In his letter to Becket's *familiares* Peter did not discuss Becket's cause in any detail, but the more pressing matter of Reginald's relationship to him. In life, then, the archbishop's influence and reputation forced Peter to balance loyalties in his writings. After his death, the same dilemma arose.

Becket's martyrdom turned many ecclesiastics into bitter critics of the king and mouthpieces for the martyr's cause. Peter, to be sure, peppered his letters with reverence for the martyr even as he tried to avoid the practical implications of his more radical ideas. He did not explicitly eulogize Becket (though early editions of Peter's letters suggested that he did).[37] Instead he saved his praise for the monks, Richard and Baldwin,

35. "nam, cum aliud non possim, oro jugiter pro vobis, ut praeveniente Altissimi gratia regis Anglorum gratiam, vestrarum rerum liberam administrationem obtinere possitis": *Ep.* 22, *PL* 207, 82.

36. See above, chapter 2, notes 123–26.

37. The early editor Goussainville, as well as Raymonde Foreville, supposed that Letter 27, which consoles the monks of Canterbury in their grief over the death of *pastor animarum nostrarum*, refers to Becket (Goussainville's note is at *PL* 207, 93). E. S. Cohn and, more recently, Lena Wahlgren, have argued that the archbishop in question must be Baldwin, who died on crusade in 1190 (Cohn, "Manuscript Evidence," 58; Wahlgren, "Peter of Blois and the Later Career of Reginald of Salisbury," 1211). The portrait of the deceased is saccharine and short on details, but nowhere is he referred to as a martyr. In addition, Peter makes reference to the subject "taking up the sign of pilgrimage," presumably the Third Crusade, which applies to Baldwin but not Thomas (*Ep.* 27, *PL* 207, 94). Foreville used the letter as a source for attitudes toward the archiepiscopal election of 1173 that elevated Richard of Dover to the primacy (Foreville, 377–78), and Markowski has seen the letter as a conventional treatment of the martyr, "a bit like a saint's life" ("Writer and Reformer," 127). These arguments rest on an uncritical acceptance of the short note by Goussainville identifying Becket as Peter's subject. The manuscript evidence also shows that this letter entered the collection in the compilations of the collection that Peter produced in the mid-1190s and afterward, that is, after Baldwin's death (see above, chapter 2, and the appendix, below). Finally, Peter reacts bitterly to the election of a successor, and we know that Thomas's successor Richard, whom he served as chancellor at Canterbury, was entirely acceptable to Peter. In 1191, on the other hand, the monks of Christ Church first chose Reginald of Salisbury, whose relationship with Peter had deteriorated. Any consideration of Peter's relation to the Becket controversy must therefore disregard the comments of Goussainville and others who took Letter 27 to be a eulogy of the martyr.

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who succeeded him as archbishop. He did invoke Becket's memory in the years immediately following the murder, usually when it was rhetorically helpful to do so. In a letter of around 1173 concerning the evils of Sicily and the retribution heaped upon wicked bishops, he praised the new saint as a possible intercessor on behalf of the English clergy, who could "with his indescribable groans appeal to the mercy of the Judge."[38] As a sainted bishop, Thomas could continue to assist those who followed his example and who fought heart and soul for the liberty of the Church. At an important time in his career (just at the time he moved from Normandy to England), Peter conceived of Becket as a model of episcopal sanctity. This plea for intercession leads to a lengthy, elegantly worded, digression on Thomas's merits that compares him favorably with that other Thomas, the apostle of India. While the apostle looks over the rising sun, Becket can watch it set; he is England's glory.[39] Peter apologizes for his digression, attributing it to *amor martyris*.[40] While his ecclesiastical connections may have placed him in an awkward position to support Becket in life, he found his intercessory power quite useful. In addition, an allusion to the famous martyr who represented so much made for an effective stylistic adornment.

After Becket's murder, few in the clergy could support Henry as fervently as some had before. One of Henry's defenders, Arnulf of Lisieux, saw fit to excise one of his *apologiae* for Henry from his letter collection, as monks and clerks set down the new saint's hagiography.[41] After Avranches, the situation changed again. In 1177, Peter had no qualms about coming to Henry's defense and dealing directly with the problem of the king's alleged complicity in the murder. In so doing he left one of the most detailed extant descriptions of the king's appearance and character.[42] Following an enthusiastic appraisal of Henry's strengths and virtues, he confronted the issue that cast a shadow over his reign at the time:

As for what you have asked me about the death of the blessed martyr Thomas, by the word of God and in deacon's orders I say to you, that I can no way be-

38. *Ep.* 46, *PL* 207, 136.

39. *Ep.* 46, *PL* 207, 156. On references to St. Thomas in India, generally in conjunction with the legend of Prester John, see Bernard Hamilton, "Prester John and the Three Kings of Cologne," in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. H. C. Davis*, ed. Henry Mayer-Harting and R. I. Moore (London and Ronceverte: Hambledon Press, 1985), 177–92.

40. Ibid.

41. Schriber, *The Dilemma of Arnulf of Lisieux*, 108. On the early construction of Becket's holiness, see Phyllis B. Roberts, "Thomas Becket: The Construction and Deconstruction of a Saint from the Middle Ages to the Reformation," in *Models of Holiness in Medieval Sermons*, Textes et Études du Moyen Âge 5 (Louvain, 1996), 1–22.

42. The description of Henry is discussed in Warren, *Henry II*, 208–210.

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lieve him [the king] to be culpable in this matter. Lord Theodwin, bishop of Porto, and lord Albert [of Morra] the chancellor, have come to our country on account of this affair to perform a legation, have pledged you their faith, and recognized the innocence of this man, and that this thing was carried out under the shadow of Henry's protection by certain others, and the whole iniquity proceeded from the sanctuary [that Henry granted the murderers]. And after these legates had accepted Henry's canonical purgation, they publicly sentenced him before God and men, by command of the pope, declaring him to be innocent of the crime. They then sent the note of infamy back against certain magnates, of whose malice they were certain.[43]

Peter's defense of Henry is a good deal more careful than that of Arnulf, who attempted soon after the murder to wash the king's hands of any responsibility. Peter instead emphasized *canonica purgatio* and the work of the legates who absolved Henry. The pope, it is true, was eager to have Henry back in the fold, and seems to have been as satisfied with Henry's penance as Peter was.[44] Peter's *apologia* for the king is, however, difficult to reconcile with his veneration of Becket, for if Becket was not martyred as an enemy of the king, for what cause was he martyred? Peter tried to have an ecclesiastical martyr without a royal antagonist, and it is not clear that he could have it both ways. He extended the reverence due to a new saint while emphasizing the power of sacramental penance. Peter's discussion of the murder was both a self-serving compromise and a skillful appeal to the procedure of absolution.

St. Thomas's name appears less frequently in Peter's letters datable to the late 1170s and afterward. Around 1179, however, Peter claimed in a letter to John of Salisbury that Archbishop Richard commanded him to write a life of the martyr. He refused, he said, because John had already written such a fine *Life* himself.[45] It is not unreasonable to suppose that Becket's successor actually made such a request of Peter, and it would be interesting for scholars to know how Peter might have reimagined the life of the martyr. The often adversarial monks of Christ Church were

43. "quod autem de morte beati marytris Thomae quaeritis, in verbo Domini et in ordine diaconi vobis dico, me nullo modo habere in conscientia ipsum huius rei culpabilem exstitisse; huiusque fidem plenissimam vobis facient dominus Theodinus Portuensis episcopus, et dominus Albertus cancellarius, qui propter hoc in partibus nostris legatione fungentes exploraverunt, et innocentiam viri cognoverunt atque sub umbra illius hoc a quibusdam attentatum fuisse, totamque hanc iniquitatem a sanctuario processisse. Accepta siquidem ab eis canonica purgatione illius, illi de mandato summi pontificis publice sententiaverunt, eum ab hoc crimine coram Deo et hominibus esse innoxium, et in quosdam magnates quorum malitiam in hac parte manifeste convicerant, notam infamiae retorserunt": *Ep.* 66, *PL* 207, 202–5.

44. Warren, *Henry II*, 531–40.

45. *Ep.* 114, *PL* 207, 342–43.

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passionately devoted to Becket's memory, so the archbishop, in his efforts to win a propaganda war with his chapter, might have wished to advance the martyr's legacy for his own purposes.[46] Later, Peter claimed that the founding of a college church of clerks in the Canterbury suburbs, the same sort of foundation that lay at the heart of Archbishop Baldwin's quarrel with the Christ Church monks, had been one of Becket's pet projects before his death. In the same passage, he discredited the monks by noting that they, in contrast to the archbishop's clerks, added to Becket's troubles and did not aid him in his exile.[47] The martyr's memory could thus justify Baldwin's quarrel with the monks while serving his own clerical bias against the cathedral chapter. Peter used Becket's name on a few other occasions, once when writing in the name of Hubert Walter, but he gave him no more extended treatment.[48]

Peter's letter collection colorfully illustrates the tremendous wake left by Becket, and the need of the middle clergy to navigate it before and after his murder. Because he was not close to Henry II during the crisis, Peter presumably did not feel the strain of conflicting loyalties to the extent that other contemporary ecclesiastics did. His loyalty to Reginald of Salisbury clearly caused him some trouble, and the pension he received from Gilbert Foliot in the 1180s may indicate a link with that most implacable enemy of Becket. But Peter was far from unique in having such connections. Unfortunately, there is no extant correspondence between Peter and Becket's most prominent episcopal enemies that could shed light on these relationships. While the events of 1170 forced him to defend Reginald (and by extension himself) from accusations of hating Becket, he did not need to backtrack on principles to do so. He had friends on both sides of the conflict, but Peter never wrote about the issues at stake in starkly ideological terms. This was, of course, the safe route, but not necessarily a disingenuous one. His comments fit well within the bounds of the contemporary rhetoric over the controversy and was conditioned by his relationships with more important men. The letter of encouragement that he wrote to John of Salisbury probably epitomizes his attitude most clearly, for it encouraged John to struggle on behalf of the Church with-

46. See Southern, *The Monks of Canterbury and the Murder of Archbishop Becket*, esp. 26–29.

47. "processu vero temporis beatissimus martyr Thomas, sicut publice scitur, toto exilii sui septennio suffrageniis et monachis suis factus est tamquam mortuus a corde (Ps. 31:13); nisi quia plerique illorum, a quibus remedia pleniora sperabat, addiderunt dolorem super dolorem illius (Ps. 68:27). Soli vero clerici, cum eo et pro eo proscripti, eidem in agone suo fideliter et finaliter astiterunt": *Later Letters*, no. 10, p. 57.

48. *Ep.* 122, *PL* 207, 356–58.

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out losing sight of Christian *mansuetudo*; fundamentally Peter was most comfortable relying on spiritual prescription. It is not clear, however, what effect this equivocation had on his career. After all, one would be hard-pressed to name a high-ranking cleric whose reputation or fortunes were ruined by unabashed opposition to Becket. Given his deftness at walking thin lines, it is ironic that it fell to Peter, as chancellor of Becket's successor, to fire one of the last shots in the legal and procedural dispute when he employed some of the language of the controversy in a letter about proper jurisdiction for murderers. His professional duty as a letter writer eventually compelled him to dissect the meaning of the debate over *regnum* and *sacerdotium*.

The Aftermath: Monks, Mediocrities, and Bishops[49]

In the years after the Avranches settlement, Peter became the *familiaris* and ultimately chancellor of the new archbishop, Richard of Dover, elected in 1173. Henry II filled four episcopal vacancies that year, and Richard was the only one of the newly elected who did not come from the circle of royal *curiales*.[50] The king had made clear that Richard, although not his first choice, was an acceptable candidate, and he was an apt representative of the tradition of monk-bishops at Canterbury that had been broken only by Thomas Becket's appointment. Richard's consecration, delayed until the vehement objections of the younger Henry had been dealt with, did not take place until 1174.[51] The new archbishop had large shoes to fill, and there were many who wished that they remain empty, for few would have looked forward to another eight years of strife between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*. Contemporaries seem to have regarded this gentle Benedictine as at best a mediocrity and at worst dangerously acquiescent to royal whim. Gerald of Wales, for one, believed that Richard's tenure threatened to deprive the Church of all Becket had gained.[52] Peter, however, served him loyally and defended his character. He shared

49. Parts of this section, and the final section of this chapter, were published in John D. Cotts, "Monks and Mediocrities in the Shadow of Thomas Becket," *Haskins Society Journal* 10 (2001): 145–64.

50. The others were Richard of Ilchester (Winchester), Geoffrey Ridel (Ely), and Reginald of Salisbury (Bath). For Richard of Ilchester, see Charles Duggan, "Richard of Ilchester, Royal Servant and Bishop." Reginald's career is alluded to above, especially in chapters 1 and 3. For Geoffrey Ridel, see Cheney, *From Becket to Langton*, 22–23, 27–28.

51. Eyton, *Court, Household, and Itinerary*, 178.

52. Gerald of Wales, *Speculum Ecclesiae* 2.25, ed. J. S. Brewer, Rolls Series 21.3 (London, 1873), 76.

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with his new master deference to royal authority and caution when framing controversial issues. Peter's correspondence to, for, and in defense of Richard prescribed ideals of episcopal service and Church-state relations ideally suited to a time when the English church had suffered through a tumultuous decade, but when the principles of clerical reform remained current in ecclesiastical discussions.

Richard had little in common with his predecessor and inevitably his reputation suffered for it. He certainly recoiled from Becket's antagonistic approach to Church-state relations, as he demonstrated in his treatment of Becket's cause célèbre, the matter of criminous clerks, which remained unresolved in the 1170s and 1180s. Becket had vehemently and famously argued that clerics ought to be tried, with few exceptions, in clerical rather than secular courts. Henry's Constitutions of Clarendon affirmed the prerogative of the secular courts to judge clerks who committed crimes.[53] For Thomas, as for John of Salisbury and radical reformers like Herbert of Bosham, the jealously guarded principle of clerical immunity required that he not budge. Thanks to the settlement at Avranches, Richard never had to confront the issue directly, but on his behalf Peter did address the relationship between royal and ecclesiastical jurisdictions, in a rather odd letter dating to the mid-1170s. The letter deftly, though obliquely, approached the question from an angle favorable to the king, leaving no question that Becket's position was too extreme. Peter and Richard addressed the piece to three bishops, formerly members of the royal household, who had been far from friendly to Becket.[54] The letter begins by noting the (possibly incorrect) perception that those who kill clerks (presumably laymen and clergy alike) get away with only minimal punishment:

> In the English church there survives a custom, pernicious to all and altogether damnable, which, unless your careful attention should remove it, will increase to the detriment of the whole clergy. If a Jew or the most vile of laymen is killed, the murderer is at once sentenced to the punishment of death. If anyone, however, kills a priest or cleric of greater or lesser standing, the church must be content with excommunication alone, and not seek out the aid of the earthly sword.[55]

53. *Constitutions of Clarendon,* Article 3, in *English Historical Documents, Vol. 2: 1042–1189,* ed. David C. Douglas and George W. Greenaway (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 719.

54. They were: John of Oxford, bishop of Norwich; Richard of Ilchester, bishop of Winchester; and Geoffrey Ridel, bishop of Ely. These were, incidently, the same bishops about whom Peter (again on Archbishop Richard's behalf) wrote Letter 84 in defense of bishops serving in royal administration.

55. *Ep.* 73, *PL* 207, 225. Contrast this with Peter's bitterness at the light punishment given to the murderers of Aaron the Jew (of Lincoln) in *Canon Episcopalis, PL* 207, 1110.

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Peter saw the ability of priest killers to avoid punishment as a *consuetudo* at odds with proper legal procedure. Here he borrowed a main argument of Becket and his followers, that custom should cede preeminence to universal Church law, but the problem is doubly charged by the reference to murderers of clergy, since the most famous murdered priest of the age was the martyred archbishop himself. This allusion itself is somewhat misplaced, since it has been shown that Becket's murderers were severely punished, and that Henry II acted quickly and decisively to punish the murderers of the bishop of Léon, killed in Brittany in 1171.[56] Peter portrays the Church as the victim of violence that excommunication alone cannot discourage. Though he never explicitly refers to criminous clerks, he shows obvious frustration with the purely ecclesiastical censures to which they were subject:

> Where, then, can one find a more monstrous and accursed crime than to walk among the anointed of the lord and to wield a sword against the people with the unrestrained audacity that comes from impunity? The sentence of excommunication would be acceptable if it could instill any fear in a murderer, but the sword of Peter is tinged with rust by our increasing faults, and because it cannot cut, it is held in contempt. If goats or sheep should have been furtively stolen or killed, a sentence of excommunication is loosed upon the perpetrator if he lies hidden, but when he is convicted or confesses he is sent to the gibbet. The killers of clerics or bishops, however, are sent to Rome, going there in comfort with the full weight of apostolic grace, and then they are returned, with greater boldness to do wrong.[57]

According to this argument, reliance on purely ecclesiastical punishments would compromise the safety of the Church and lead to the ludicrous injustice that the deaths of livestock are taken more seriously than those of clerks. Once again, he may refer to the murder of Becket, since the expression *grassari in Christos Domini* could well pun on *grassatores* ("ruffians"), the term of derision applied to Becket's murderers by William Fitz Stephen. In addition, Peter describes clerk killers being sent to Rome, where the pope imposed penances on Becket's killers.[58] Even as he advocated a less adversarial stance on the part of the Church, Peter saw fit to draw on the passions stirred up by Becket's murder. Peter argues that the only corrective to this sorry state of affairs is the vigorous enforcement of

56. Nicholas Vincent, "The Murderers of Thomas Becket," in *Bischofsmord im Mittelalter,* ed. Natalie Fryde and Dirk Reitz, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 191 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck un Ruprecht, 2003), 211–72.

57. *Ep.* 73, 225.

58. Vincent, "The Murderers," 213 (citing *MTB,* 3.135, 140), 255–63.

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justice by the secular government, since the Church has not the right to apply the strongest punishment:

> But we deserve these things [the lenient punishment of priest killers] and worse, because we usurp another's jurisdiction (which is in no way ours) due to rash ambition. You may recall that we have read these words in the corpus of decretals, as well as the epistle to the Romans: There are great crimes that are better judged by the judges of the world rather than by the rulers and judges of the church. . . . Let the church exercise its own jurisdiction first, and if this does not suffice, let the secular sword compensate for the shortcoming.[59]

Here the letter becomes more polemical, attacking those who would grant the Church sweeping jurisdiction. Ecclesiastical zealots wish to behave like lay judges, but their clerical status prohibits them from taking effective actions. Peter implies that, in attempting to extend ecclesiastical jurisdiction to those who kill clerics, they denude the Church of its ability to defend itself. Only secular power can instill the necessary fear. Peter came to this debate well armed with a knowledge of canon law. The presence of allusions to the Decretals throughout his letter collection make it entirely possible that this knowledge came from his own background rather than merely Richard of Dover's direction.

Becket's pet issue of criminous clerks, of course, is technically tangential to the discussion, for Peter is concerned here with clerics as victims rather than as criminals. But he unquestionably has Becket in mind when he uses the martyr's own formula for prohibiting the prosecution of clerks in lay and ecclesiastical courts: *bis in idipsum judicat Deus*.[60] In cases concerning capital offenses, Peter sees a single judgment; there is no double jeopardy. By way of articulating this idea, Peter enters into one of the very few discussions of the Two Swords theory in his letter collection:

> Let it not be said that anyone would in this way be punished twice for the same crime, nor should it be seen that something begun by one is finished by another. There are two swords which implore reciprocal aid of each other, and so each in turn they impart to themselves different strengths, the priesthood

59. "Sed his et deterioribus digni sumus, qui jurisdictionem alienam, et nobis omnino indebitam ambitione temeraria usurpamus. Nam in corpore decretorum, et in Epistola ad Romanos haec verba nos legisse meminimus. Sunt quaedam enormia flagitia, quae potius per mundi judices, quam per rectores et judices Ecclesiarum judicantur . . . Ecclesia jursidictionem suam prius exerceat; et si illa non sufficit, ejus imperfectum suppleat gladius saecularis": *Ep.* 73, *PL 207,* 225–26. Peter here is quoting, with slight variation, *Decretum* 2.23.5.39, ed. Friedberg, 1.941: "Sunt quedam enormia flagicia, que pocius per mundi iudices, quam per antistites et rectores ecclesiarum uindicantur," commenting on Romans 13.

60. Warrren points out this parallel; see *Henry II,* 539–40.

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to kings, and the kingship to priests. . . . Therefore, rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's and what is God's to God (Luke 20:25), according to the petition of the lord king, we relinquish to him the punishment of such transgressions.[61]

The church's proper role is in the granting of absolution to the killers so they are properly prepared to receive their just punishment—a single punishment is carried out by complementary powers. Moreover, Peter expresses profound pessimism at the efficacy of excommunication. Becket had thrown that penalty about freely enough, and made new enemies thereby. Although canon law prohibited clerics from participating in judgments of blood, social stability required that such judgments be made from time to time.

This letter cannot have pleased everyone in the English church. Its argument, blatantly anti-Becket but soundly rooted in Gelasian tradition, agreed with the Anglo-Norman decretal collections from the 1160s, but ran against the grain of post-1170 decretals.[62] Though he referred to neither Becket nor criminous clerks per se, his brief discussion of the need for secular punishment brings to light the problem of jurisdiction that had played a pivotal role in the Becket dispute, but uses the memory of Becket's death as the unspoken referent of most of his arguments. The solution presented in the letter, an idealized espousal of cooperation between the two swords, floats on a surface that hides a current of canonical ambiguities, and embodies a spirit of compromise that inspired hostile criticism toward Archbishop Richard.

Richard incurred a rebuke from Alexander III because he allowed episcopal elections to take place in the royal chapel, and he appears in a decidedly negative light in Gerald of Wales's *Speculum ecclesiae*, which attacks the archbishop as a prime example of why monks should not be bishops.[63] Peter attempted to manage Richard's alleged unpopularity in

61. "nec dicatur quod aliquis puniatur propter hoc bis in id ipsum; nec enim videtur quo ab uno incipitur, et ab altero consummatur. Duo sunt gladii, qui mutuum a se mendicant auxilium, atque ad invicem sibi vires impartiuntur alternas, sacerdotium regibus, et sacerdotibus regnum . . . Reddentes igitur Deo quae Dei sunt, et Caesari quae sunt Caesaris, iuxta petitionem domini regis, ei tantorum vindictam excessuum relinquamus": *Ep.* 73, 227.

62. On Richard as a canonist and the reception of the Becket conflict in canon law, see Charles Duggan, *Twelfth-Century Decretal Collections and Their Importance in English History* (London: Athlone Press, 1963); Richard M. Fraher, "The Becket Dispute and Two Decretist Traditions: The Bolognese Masters Revisited and Some New Anglo-Norman Texts," *Journal of Medieval History* 4 (1978): 347–368; and Edward M. Peters, "The Archbishop and the Hedgehog," in *Law, Church, and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays in Honor of Stephan Kuttner*, ed. Kenneth Pennington and Robert Somerville (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 167–84.

63. Warren, *Henry II*, 553; see also above, note 51.

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Letter 5, addressed to the archbishop, ostensibly while he was away on business at the royal court. Contemplating ways of improving Richard's reputation with the clergy, Peter characterized the discontent aroused by Richard's perceived inaction as expressed in the vituperative whispers of the court. The *curiales* apparently goaded Peter with daily jabs at the archbishop:

> "Where is your lord? Where is he hiding? Where does he sleep? To what end does this sluggish man sleep? Rise, o sleeper, and awake from the dead [Ephes. 15:14]. The hour is here for him to wake from sleep [Rom. 13:11], to watch over the flock entrusted to him, and to be mindful of what sort of predecessor he had. Did he accept the grace of God in vain, in order to destroy the grace given to him, as well as the glory of his predecessor? . . . Your archbishop found the church in a great state, but he has forsaken it and cast it down. His faint-heartedness has destroyed the privileges of the church of Canterbury, which the glorious martyr adorned with his own blood and confirmed as an eternal witness with his death and the spilling out of his brains, and he has returned it into the humiliation of its former servitude, when it had risen to freedom.[64]

The *communis opinio* among the whisperers at court (who were apparently quite adept at scriptural allusion) was that Richard left the Church at the mercy of its enemies, and thus meshed perfectly with Gerald of Wales's assessment. In response to the detractors, Peter (so he told Richard) praised Richard as a good monk, thoughtful and kind if quiet and unassuming. The clerics at court wanted a new Becket, an activist bishop who would fight for the Church's freedom. Nothing Peter said was good enough for his adversaries. If he protested that Richard had done nothing wrong, they replied that "it is not enough to do no evil, unless he strikes out to do good."[65] If he applauded Richard's aggressive building program at Canterbury, which included ponds and parks, these were dismissed as having been constructed at the expense of crumbling cloisters.[66] Furthermore, Richard was said to be neglecting his duties as papal legate.

The list of complaints is long, and Peter regretfully notes in his report that even the king himself has expressed displeasure at the archbishop, but has offered to support Richard against anyone who would get in the way of Richard's execution of his duties:

64. *Ep.* 5, *PL* 207, 13–14. On the significance of contemporary descriptions of Becket's wounds, see Martin Aurell, "Le Meurtre de Thomas Becket: Les Gestes d'un Martyre," in *Bischofsmord im Mittelalter*, 200–210.

65. *Ep.* 5, *PL* 207, 14.

66. *Ep.* 5, *PL* 207, 15. Cf. Markowski, "Writer and Reformer," 237–38.

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Let the lord archbishop know [says the king] that if my elect son [Henry the Young King] or any bishop or earl of the land, or anyone else for that matter, should contradict or impede his will, so that he less effectively fulfills the work of the legation assigned to him, that person will find in me a vigorous avenger. . . .[67]

Numerous pressures bore down on Richard from all sides, but Peter still could portray the king favorably, as a willing partner of the Church. This piece, after all, is one of the first letters appearing in a letter collection supposedly dedicated to the king. Peter found himself in a difficult position because Richard's failure to follow Becket's example apparently touched off a wave of whispering at the court. The letter concludes with an exhortation for Richard to look to his ministry and to avoid any impending ignominy. Peter brilliantly outlined the complexities of ecclesiastical politics in Becket's shadow. The new archbishop had impossible expectations to fill, a monarch to appease, and a chorus of critics who would not stop defaming him. Peter offered his own criticism, to be sure, but Richard's reputation received the bulk of his attention.

This letter reveals as much about Peter's situation as about Richard's. Here, as elsewhere, Peter presents himself as a concerned adviser, a mediator between his master and the court. Although Richard was criticized for letting *laici* trample the Church, Peter does not frame his discussion as a conflict between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*, reflecting, perhaps, his conception of the two swords as complementary. *Libertas ecclesiae* is in Peter's eyes fully consistent with royal cooperation, and when he notes Henry's supposed offer to pressure Richard's enemies, he seems to acquiesce to royal interference in the Church. Concerns of power and the image of the Church mingle in Peter's appraisal of courtly opinion, while the rhetorical debris left in Becket's wake obstructs his attempts to turn Richard into an ideal bishop. Despite the spirit of compromise pervading the Church in the early 1170s, Peter continually ran into opponents whose polemic retained the ideal of Becket as an aggressive opponent of royal authority.

Peter implied that Richard had enemies at the Roman curia, and this is confirmed in Letter 38, which defends the archbishop's character to a cardinal, Albert of Morra, an old friend who would become Pope Gregory VIII. It was at this point that Richard incurred a rebuke from Lucius III for Peter's profligacy at Rome.[68] Peter had the task of repre-

67. *Ep.* 5, *PL* 207, 15.
68. See above, chapter 1, note 78.

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senting Richard as an ideal bishop despite his cooperation with the king and his perceived laxity in matters of the Church's liberty. Avoiding any mention of Thomas Becket, Peter describes Richard as an ideal monk and hence an ideal bishop. His humility and mildness were in fact virtues: "He was not a dominator of the clergy but a model for his flock among the people [1 Peter 5:3], guarding his vessel in holiness (1 Thess. 4:4), and not allowing his consecrated lips to speak vanities [2 Tim. 2:16]."[69] From an account of Richard's monastic virtues Peter passes on to his priestly virtues. Richard assisted the poor, widows, and orphans. Like the Apostles Peter and Andrew, Richard emerged from a simple fishing boat rather than from the forum of Justinian.[70] At this point, to highlight Richard's holy *simplicitas*, Peter draws on a dichotomy that may not be entirely relevant to the case at hand, contrasting Richard to those who study the law and to *sapientia mundi* in general.

> If my lord thinks humbly, if he does have pride [Rom. 11:20], if he does not set his sights too high [Ps. 131:1], if he is ignorant of the precedents of the old law, he is nonetheless learned in the law of God. In this, which is wisdom from on high [James 3:17], he walks upon the paths of justice [Prov. 8:20], decreeing nothing in the decision of cases that he does not grant to common audience and public notice. For he pronounces his justice as a light and his judgment as mid-day sun [Ps. 37:6].[71]

Though the trope of *indocta spaientia*, Peter places Richard in the company of simple, unlearned saints, although in so doing he may unnecessarily downplay his actual attainments as a jurist. Rhetorically, however, the strategy is sound, accepting the criticisms of Richard as mild and inactive, and turning his perceived faults into virtues by way of the monastic ideal. Peter then exposes what he takes to be the true reasons for criticism of the archbishop. His critics are upset, so Peter claims, that he does not confiscate the goods of paupers, and does not give Church property to huntsmen. In fact, he argues, Richard's problems have arisen because he fixes his mind on the work of God without regard for glory, despite Peter's warnings (as he confesses here to Albert) that he look out for his reputation.[72] Peter concludes by warning Albert of the schemes of gossips who conspire against Richard, and by requesting continued assistance with Richard's *negotia*. Peter has opposed a meek sheep to the rapacious worldly ecclesiastics who care not about the simpler, and hence more important, obligations of a bishop.

69. *Ep.* 38, *PL* 207, 117.
70. Ibid.
71. *Ep.* 38, *PL* 207, 118.
72. *Ep.* 38, *PL* 207, 118.

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The kind of episcopal simplicity that Peter had in mind provided a possible solution to the very problem of strife between Church and state. He continued throughout Richard's reign to turn his perceived weaknesses into virtues, especially in Letter 100 to an unknown *dominus et amicus* around 1176.[73] Peter's argument hinges on a positive assessment of Richard's *lenitas*, that is, his "mildness" or "gentleness." Apparently Richard's detractors used this same word in its pejorative connotation. Not only did Peter turn this quality into a virtue, but makes it the prerequisite to improved relations between *regnum* and *sacerdotium:*

> My friend, there are two sorts of mildness. There is necessary mildness and dissolute mildness. Take honey: although it is rightly prohibited from the sacrifice, just as you assiduously note, the first fruits of honey are nevertheless offered [Lev. 2:12]; and where the sacrifice of honey is prohibited, there the first fruits are required to be offered. You wish, as all those who share your foolishness wish, that my lord out of some turbulence of spirit would dissolve the pact and the peace between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*. Nor do they wish that he offer the first fruits of honey in an offer of peace. . . . Look to this diligently, because it is a certain careful and necessary tolerance that is offered to the powers of this world, and especially to a king who holds supreme power [1 Peter 2:13]. For all power comes from God [Rom. 13:1]. This mildness makes *regnum* and *sacerdotium* one; hence he obtained by his kindness what he could never wrench from princes through threats or violence.[74]

A mild conciliatory bishop can bring increased harmony in the world. Richard (and Peter) reacted to the tumult of the 1160s by turning away from Becket's confrontational disposition. Peter's writings recall the ideal, expressed in writers like Peter Damian and Bernard of Clairvaux, of a dyarchy in which Church and state in fact become one.[75] Within this dyarchy, the *spiritus irae et commotionis* can only prove disruptive, and the most effective way to improve the prince is through *lenitas columbina* rather than *indignatio vultuosa*.[76] Peter's defense of *lenitas* in this respect recalls his advice to the chaplain of the king of Sicily, whom he urged

73. Higonnet dates the letter to around 1176, after Richard had been in office for two years. The letter does not seem to have entered the collection until the 1190s (see the appendix, below), so it is possible that Peter refers to Baldwin. The description of the bishop's personality, however, is inconsistent with his usual opinion of Baldwin. For the date, see Higonnet, "The Letters of Peter of Blois," 479.

74. *Ep.* 100, *PL* 207, 309.

75. See I. S. Robinson, *Authority and Resistance in the Investiture Contest: The Polemical Literature of the Late Eleventh Century* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1978), passim.

76. *Ep.* 100, 310.

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to rebuke the king moderately before showing anger.[77] The pastor, then, is not a litigator or an overly severe critic, but a gentle sage. Peter carefully distinguishes this *lenitas* from the flattery with which many bishops shower the king. Richard performs the duties of his office well because he does not spread dissension, does not flatter the king, and can bear the insults of others: "Prelates are appointed so that they may modestly and patiently bear the injuries of a deceiver's tongue."[78] Peter describes Richard as the ideal leader outlined in Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care*, and Bernard of Clairvaux's *De consideratione*, often using similar language.[79] The letter thus concludes by referring to Richard's endurance of criticism as proof that such criticism is undeserved.

Peter had to defend Richard's character as he repeatedly had to defend his own. Richard seems to have had a profound aversion to conflict, which may account for the relative respect in which the Canterbury monks held him in the *Epistolae Cantuarienses*.[80] His conciliatory attitude toward the *regnum* exposed him to criticism, which Peter tried to avert through appeals to an ideal that had not been applicable to Becket. In Richard he saw a bishop who could not be described as a heroic martyr, or the sort who was admired for administrative acumen.[81] Richard fulfilled his duty by feeding widows and orphans, not by resisting the king or displaying organizational genius.

In 1184, upon the death of Richard of Dover, Baldwin of Ford, then bishop of Worcester, was translated to the see of Canterbury. Peter apparently had a close relationship with the new archbishop. Although he did not retain the title of *cancellarius*, he did plead Baldwin's case against the Christ Church monks before the Roman *curia*. This case thrust Peter into a bitter dispute in a political arena and attracted to him the ire of the cathedral chapter; and it was in summarizing the affair that Peter commented that Baldwin was *perplexus inter Christum et Caesarem*.[82] Peter wrote about Baldwin's predicament after the affair was over, as a kind of epilogue to Baldwin's legal defeat in the struggle, a struggle Peter would regret in his later years. In general, Peter treated Baldwin, a Cistercian,

77. *Ep.* 10, *PL* 207, 27–32.

78. "et ad hoc praelati constituti sunt, ut linguae meretricantis injurias modeste et patienter ferant": *Ep.* 100, *PL* 207, 311.

79. On Peter's use of Gregory's and Bernard's imagery, see below.

80. The *Epistolae* refer to Richard only rarely, but the prologue to that collection clearly contrasts his humble piety with what was perceived as his successor's arrogance. See *Epp. Cant.*, 2.

81. See Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Spirituality and Administration: The Role of the Bishop in Twelfth-Century Auxerre* (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1979).

82. *Later Letters,* no. 10, p. 59.

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much as he had treated his Benedictine predecessor, focusing on his qualities as a monk. He included four letters written in Baldwin's name in his letter collection, two of which discuss Cîteaux. One of these requested prayers from the abbey as Baldwin ascended to the archiepiscopate, and the other attacked monastic exemption from paying tithes after an introductory passage on the greatness of the Cistercian order.[83] Peter's admiration for Citeaux, displayed several times in his later letters, may have stemmed from his association with Baldwin. In Letter 96, Baldwin enters his new office humbly and timidly, unsure whether he can look after his own salvation let alone that of a province.[84] Peter probably exaggerates Baldwin's anxiety somewhat, since he had already led the abbey of Ford as well as the see of Worcester, but the letter clearly imputes to the new metropolitan the requisite amount of monastic humility. Once again, Peter needed to find a balance between the virtues of a monk and those of a bishop.

At least as presented by Peter's letter collection, Baldwin's vision of episcopal service was defined by his monastic spirituality. A later letter placed the blame for the interminable dispute squarely on the lax discipline of the cathedral monks, which offended Baldwin's austere Cistercian sensibility.[85] As he did with Richard, Peter largely ignored Baldwin's intellectual and juridical attainments when praising him. In a eulogy of the archbishop sent to the secular chapter of Beverly, Peter portrayed Baldwin as the paragon of monastic virtue as well as a crusader (Baldwin died outside Acre in 1190). He to imparted an other-worldly quality to Baldwin, and implied that he was too good for the world.[86] This may have been intended to excuse some of Baldwin's failures, just as Peter attributed Richard's passivity to his Christian gentleness. Peter's eulogy of Baldwin concludes with an invective against his newly elected archbishop, Peter's onetime patron Reginald de Bohun, who died before consecration. Despite his admiration for the monk-bishops he served, Peter's clerical bias shows through as he denounces the election as *furtiva et clandestina*, without deliberation by the proper prelates. The monks of Canterbury were in his view the true oppressors of the Church.[87] Peter thus uses a eulogy of Baldwin as a starting point for a personal attack on his estranged friend Reginald and the monks who ridiculed him in their letters. In fact, although Peter saw it as detrimental to the harmony

83. *Ep.* 82, *PL* 207, 252–55; *Ep.* 96, *PL* 207, 302–4. The *argumentum* in the *PL*, and headings in several MSS, incorrectly state that these letters were written in the name of Richard of Dover.

84. *Ep.* 96, 303.

85. *Later Letters*, no. 10, p. 58.

86. *Ep.* 27, PL 207, 93–96.

87. *Ep.* 27, 95.

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of the Church, the election of Reginald does not seem to have been uncanonical. The last third of this piece makes no mention of Baldwin, so Peter probably intended to use him as a foil. By comparison with Richard of Dover, Baldwin was an active, controversial character. He immersed himself in the preaching of the Third Crusade and continued Canterbury's struggles with York for supremacy. Still, what Peter lamented most bitterly was his tragically conflicting obligations to Christ, Caesar, and his Cistercian ideals.

As a *familiaris* in the Canterbury household, Peter, a secular cleric through and through, found himself with the rhetorical task of turning monks into ideal bishops. Bernard of Clairvaux's *De consideratione* had recognized this difficulty, but Peter wrote from a less secure position than Bernard, and had to deal with the memory of Becket and those who mourned his murder when attacking his successors. Peter did not try to turn either of his employers into another Becket. Instead he extolled their obvious virtues, sometimes overstated their understandable faults, and ultimately achieved a kind of synthesis of monastic and clerical ideals, just before the emergence of the radical Franciscan and Dominican models for the apostolic life and leadership. Peter's own anxieties are never far from the surface of his defense of Richard and Baldwin, for he too felt trapped between the ideal of Becket and a more prudent course. *Lenitas* served his purposes as well as it did those of his archbishops.

The Bishop between God and the Monarch

Peter's apologies and eulogies for Richard and Baldwin, dependent on the ideal of the peaceful good shepherd, constitute only part of his treatment of proper episcopal duty. In a number of his letters from earlier and later issues of his letter collection, Peter developed a program for the episcopal life drawn from ideals of personal reform and vigilance for the liberty of the Church, occasionally softened with exhortations to cooperation with the secular power. Although the documentary evidence for Peter's career demonstrates his attachment to Richard and Baldwin, they were not the only bishops Peter advised. He was to a certain extant an intimate of Baldwin's successor at Canterbury, Hubert Walter (who was also chief justiciar), and of Walter of Coutances, the archbishop of Rouen who would become royal chancellor under King Richard I. Peter still operated near the highest levels of ecclesiastical power at a time when royal servants did not (in contrast with Becket and most others in the 1160s and 1170s) renounce their secular offices upon taking over a

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see.[88] Peter's views on royal courts and their culture informed his views on episcopal duty, and he had written to the pope on his archbishop's behalf, that the presence of bishops in the royal court was imperative for the safety of the Church.[89]

His early letters of advice to prelates advocated a close deferential relationship with the *regnum*, but in the 1190s he urged bishops to intervene more aggressively (if essentially cooperatively) in royal affairs. Still working with the model of an ideal cleric who advised the king, Peter now implored bishops to interfere actively in the king's business when the Church or the people were threatened.

Three of the letters from the early versions of Peter's letter collection make cooperation with the *regnum* incumbent upon clerics, and clearly seek out compromise at any cost. In the mid-1170s, Peter approached the touchy subject of a rebellious bishop in a letter to the then-disgraced Arnulf of Lisieux. He had accompanied Arnulf on an embassy to Louis VII concerning the rebellion of the Young King in 1173, but now, at the end of his career, Arnulf was himself implicated in the rebellion, and decidedly out of favor with Henry II. To make matters worse, Arnulf could no longer control his own cathedral chapter.[90] He ultimately retired to a monastery, a move that Peter found to be a shirking of his pastoral duty. Peter advised him not to resign save for reasons of health:

> But if you fear the indignation of the prince, or the troubles caused by your chapter, or any other hardships of this life, and you have chosen peace and quiet, you have chosen the path of a man of weak and dejected soul; it is not fitting for you, who are believed to have a great and generous heart. Indeed, in this rest you will find no rest, and behold, in this peace your bitterness will be most bitter indeed [Is. 38:17]. . . . If you trust me, let no vexation lead you to the resignation of the bishopric.[91]

Peter turns Arnulf into a veritable Job who must suffer what God sends him by accepting and enduring secular responsibilities. If the virtues Peter found in his ideal bishops like Richard of Dover and Baldwin of Ford were in part monastic, he nonetheless recognizes a strict distinction in vocation between secular and cloistered clergy. Arnulf ought not to become a monk, for that is not his calling. Perhaps, Peter avers, he could recover

88. Cheney, *From Becket to Langton*, 22–25; for the life of Walter of Coutances, see Peter A. Poggioli, "From Politician to Prelate: The Career of Walter of Coutances, Archbishop of Rouen 1184–1207" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1984).

89. *Ep.* 84. See above, chapter 4.

90. Schriber, *The Dilemma of Arnulf of Lisieux*, 117–22.

91. *Ep.* 44, *PL* 207, 129.

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his position in the world by humbling himself before the king. He could then return to Henry's good graces, even though the king "detests above all the rebellion of his bishops."[92] The letter then takes a darker turn as Peter offers another way out of the office: he could claim he acquired the office illegitimately, which, at any rate, was what the current gossip suggested. Peter concludes by warning Arnulf to look to his standing with God, since the end is not far away, and rebukes him for the ambition of his youth. The advice to an old dying bishop, then, is to repent for earlier transgressions and to make amends to the king for his rebellion. This bishop's last resort, should he realize the true weight of his sins, is penance, which for Peter is often the necessary consequence of clerical activity. What starts as a consolation turns into a warning against overambitious bishops as well as those who cross their king.

Royal politics intruded on episcopal duty in other ways. The repeated rebellions of the Young King, and the failure of Bishop Ralph of Angers to oppose him, inspired another rebuke from Peter in which he presented the ideal bishop as a great ally of his king. This piece dates from about the same period as Arnulf's disgrace. The people of Angers, Peter writes, have turned against the king, and their bishop Ralph has done nothing to bring them back into Henry's camp. "Now is the time," writes Peter, "to take up the sword and cast judgment [Deut. 32:41], to wreak vengeance on the nations, punishment on the peoples [Ps. 149:7]."[93] He provides a wealth of classical examples—Clearchus, Appius Claudius, Cato—to show the importance of standing by one's ruler and showing no fear toward the enemy. This bishop is effectively an instrument of state policy:

> I do not say that by your counsel or urging the lord king should exercise the severity of the material sword on your people (for I know that in this respect he works as deputy to an exacting Judge) but that you do what is your part. Invigorate their feeble hands, weakened knees, and fearful minds, and either recall their faithless souls to loyalty toward their prince, or restrain them with the spiritual sword.[94]

In exercising the sword of St. Peter the bishop may use excommunication, but above all he must be a leader of the people to complement the authority of the king. "It is fidelity alone that augments the glory of the people, strengthens the peace, instills fear in enemies."[95] Loyalty to the king is a sacred obligation, and the bishop must, through spiritual sanction if necessary, ensure it. Peter advocates unwavering obedience to the king in a

92. *Ep.* 44, 129.
93. *Ep.* 69, *PL* 207, 214.
94. *Ep.* 69, 216.
95. *Ep.* 69, 217.

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less urgent context when he rebukes an anonymous prelate for slandering Henry, because "a greater reverence is owed" to kings.[96]

These last three letters, it must be noted, appeared in the earlier compilations of Peter's letter collection, which treat the worldly duties of the clergy with greater sympathy than later versions. Peter's exhortations to serve the king loyally show that bishops had a definite place in secular affairs and in attending to the common good. The letter to Ralph of Angers departs somewhat from the theme of mildness and humility that characterized the letters concerning Richard and Baldwin, but it does emphasize the importance of preaching, that is, of fulfilling those duties enjoined peculiarly on the clergy.

Peter, however, did not always advise a posture of mild submission to royal authority, and in the later compilations of his collection he developed a more obstructionist role in Church-state relations for the higher clergy. A letter to Odo, bishop of Paris, added to the letter collection after the mid-1190s, exhorts the recipient to stick out his neck for the liberty of the Church against a rapacious royal administration. Perhaps as a result of his intimacy with Baldwin, a prominent bishop, Peter had taken an intense interest in the Third Crusade, and wrote a group of treatises to inspire men to take the cross and to rebuke the kings of the West for delaying their departures for the Holy Land. The taxes imposed by Philip Augustus to finance the crusade seem to have been particularly loathsome to Peter, for they represented a gross inversion of the proper prosecution of the crusade, a military action that should in theory have entailed service by the kings for the Church. Peter advocated open resistance to any attempt to tax the Church. In his letter to Bishop Odo, Peter explained the urgency of the matter. Building on the imagery of the *gladius spiritualis,* defined above all as preaching, he admonished the bishops of France not to flatter the king and thus encourage his schemes, but to resist his attempts to rob the Church:

> Do the work of an evangelist and fulfill the duty of your ministry. I say to bishops: Do not emulate those who do wrong [Ps. 36:1], who flatter your king with fawning adulation, mute dogs who cannot bark [Isaiah 56:10]. It is most acceptable to God for a bishop to profess the truth. You should not fear to lay down your soul for the truth, so that you may see good days [1 Peter 3:10], because the Lord will demand an accounting for the blood of the dying from the hand of the mute priest. Indeed, the ark of God is taken [1 Sam 4:11], his people felled by the sword, when the priest relaxes the correction of the sons.[97]

96. *Ep.* 40, *PL* 207, 119–20.
97. *Ep.* 112, *PL* 207, 335–36.

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This is entirely consistent with Peter's writings on the need for clerics to advise and correct rulers. But in the letters presenting a courtly bishop as a wise sage, Peter had never stated the case in such antagonistic terms. Perhaps it took the Third Crusade, about which Peter clearly had strong feelings, to induce him to advance a program of ecclesiastical opposition to kings. The method, however, is still that suited to the clergy: preaching, emphasizing above all teaching the king and people what their proper duty to the Church may be. The king is to be resisted by *doctrina et exhortatio*. In this case, the king being resisted is not the king of England, but Philip Augustus. Peter never openly told a bishop to stand up to Henry II. Letter 75 advises a dean who is going to negotiate with the king how to deal with Henry, who is at once a lion and lamb, but who can be made, through skillful instruction, to do the Church's will.[98] Peter probably felt less *pietas* toward Richard I, since in a letter of about the same time as the letter to Odo, he accused Henry's successor of oppressing the Church to fund his crusade.[99]

Two ideals, then, govern Peter's prescriptions for how a bishop should regard a secular ruler. The first stresses cooperation between *regnum* and *sacerdotium* and forbids obstruction of the former. As in traditional theology, the Church and the state are part of one *ecclesia*. The other ideal, not at odds with the conception of two spheres cooperating within the Church, recognizes the danger posed by secular powers to the *libertas ecclesiae*, and the need for clerics to confront that danger. The chronology of Peter's writings suggests that, as Peter grew older and became less intimately involved with the royal and archiepiscopal households, he focused more on the tensions between the two spheres. Equally as important as Peter's attempts to properly situate a bishop in relation to the king are the related concerns of personal reform and adherence to proper clerical *ordo*. In Letter 15, which appeard in all compilations of Peter's letter collection, he warns a count turned bishop, one Rainald, that he must fundamentally change his way of life and can only assume his new position *omni antiqua vanitate deposita*.[100] Peter clearly distinguishes the episcopal office from any other position of power and again stresses personal sanctity and the need to preach. Peter covers a great deal of ground, and offers a string of episcopal virtues for Rainald to follow, virtues prominent in the works of writers from Gregory the Great to Bernard of Clairvaux.[101] Other letters, such as those to Reginald discussed above, point out the

98. *Ep.* 75, *PL* 207, 230.
99. *Ep.* 121, *PL* 207, 354–56.
100. *Ep.* 15, *PL* 207, 51–59.
101. The ultimate source for these virtues is most likely 1 Tim. 3.

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dangers of drinking, and of using the office to promote one's relatives. In such cases, Peter clearly flowed with the general current of ecclesiastical reform, and can be rightly seen as a proponent of reform. But when it came to direct confrontation with monarchs, Peter shied away from the views of the more aggressive reformers.

A Tentative Synthesis: The *Canon episcopalis*

Toward the end of his career, probably around 1196–1197, Peter channeled his views on episcopal duty into a treatise longer than most of his letters, variously titled *Canon episcopalis* or *De institutione episcopi*.[102] In this epistolary tract, dedicated to John of Coutances, nephew of Walter of Coutances, Peter produced a nonsystematic but effective attempt to integrate the fundamental clerical virtues valued by Peter with the bishop's role in the world.[103] The bishop-elect John was, as Peter once confessed himself to have been, decidedly *in curialibus undis immersus*, and attached to the royal *familia*, and he took over some of his father's administrative duties when the latter left England.[104] While the tract betrays a bias against serving in the court, and it should be noted that Peter wrote it during the period when his writings on clerical court service became more unambiguously critical, Peter paints a portrait of an ideal bishop of greater charisma and authority than the one found in his letters about Richard and Baldwin. John is urged to keep his mind on the world to come while wielding the spiritual sword on behalf of his flock in this world. The *Canon episcopalis* represents several years of development in Peter's conception of episcopal duty, synthesizing several strands of thought on right behavior and Church-state relations. Once again, Peter connected ideals of monastic provenance with traditional notions of pastoral care, to create a prescriptive work suited to the period.

After an introduction laced with embarrassing sycophancy, Peter of-

102. The *Canon episcopalis* appears in the manuscripts among the letters. It has been published as a distinct tract since the sixteenth century, presumably because in his *Invectiva in depravatorem* Peter refers to it by this name in a list of his works (*PL* 207, 1115).

103. Some manuscripts omit the address clause to John of Coutances and add a title suggesting that the work was dedicated to Pope Innocent III or even Innocent IV. The scribe of Cambridge University Library MS Ff-5-46 (s. xiv) annotates the opening words "petis instantissime" with "ad papam," while British Library MS Harley 3684 (s. xv) is titled an "exhortatio ad papam Innocentium quartum [*sic*] qualiter in statu praelationis debeat se habere" at f. 145r. Aside from the fact that the pope in question would have been Innocent III rather than Innocent IV, both of these scribal annotations seem misplaced, since the work is clearly written for a new bishop; nothing about it seems specifically of interest to a pope.

104. *Ep.* 14A, Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 145.

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fers as his first model of an ideal bishop Walter of Coutances, John's own uncle. The list of virtues is an adaptation of a description of ideal leaders used frequently throughout the Middle Ages, and that Bernard of Clairvaux had used in his *De consideratione:*

> If you wish to imitate [your uncle] faithfully, you will be composed in your manners, liberal, affable, gentle, prudent in giving advice, forceful in your actions, careful in giving orders, modest in your speech, fearful when your fortunes are good, confident in adversity, calm in the midst of those who quarrel, peaceful in the presence of those who hate peace, profuse in alms-giving, moderate in zeal but fervid in mercy, neither anxious nor indifferent in the acquittal of household business, circumspect in all things. . . .[105]

Peter urges this new English bishop to adapt the same habits and virtues that are described in a passage of *De consideratione* concerned with the men that Pope Eugenius III ought to admit to the papal *curia*.[106] In the *Canon episcopalis*, Peter does not equate the perfect bishop with the perfect monk as explicitly as Bernard does, and in fact not so much as he himself had done in his defense of Richard of Dover. In fact, though Peter certainly had great admiration for Cistercian and other monastic ideals, his use of the list of episcopal virtues favored by Bernard of Clairvaux need not lead to the conclusion that he was monasticizing the ideals for the episcopal office. These ideals had been a fundamental part of his education, and were easily applicable to the pastoral responsibilities of the secular clergy.[107]

As if to accentuate Walter of Coutances's role in the treatise as the ideal bishop (and so emphasize Peter's intimacy with him), Peter gives John the same advice he gave Walter in another letter, namely, that he should not waste his leisure time.[108] A bishop must be humble, imbued with grace, and a true leader with his eyes turned at once toward God

105. "si velitis fideliter imitari, eritis ad mores compositus, liberalis, affabilis, mansuetus, in consiliis providus, in agendo strenuus, in jubendo discretus, in loquendo modestus, timidus in prosperitate, in adversitate securus, mitis inter dyscolos, cum eis qui oderunt pacem pacificus, effusus in eleemosynis, in zelo temperans, in misericordia fervens, in rei familiaris dispensatione nec anxius, nec supinus, circumspectus ad omnia": *Canon Episcopalis*, *PL* 207, 1099. See also C. Stephen Jaeger, "The Courtier Bishop in *Vitae* from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century," *Speculum* 58 (1983): 291–325.

106. Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione* 4.4.12, in *S. Bernardi Opera Omnia*, 3:457.

107. On Bernard, see Hayden White, "The Gregorian Ideal and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 21 (1960), 321–48. Cf. Elizabeth T. Kennan, "The *De consideratione* and the Papacy in the mid-Twelfth Century: A Review of the Scholarship," *Traditio* 28 (1964): 73–115.

108. *Canon episcopalis*, 1102; *Ep.* 125, *PL* 207, 374.

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and his own flock. Peter espouses many standard episcopal virtues, framing them within a *scito te ipsum* ("know thyself") theme. The good bishop is aware of his place in the world, and his place in the order of things:

> A prelate's glory is to judge himself to be wretched and weak, insufficient for his labor and unworthy of his honor. There are those who think honors are virtues and who attribute their eminence to their merits, which they perhaps obtained only in God's anger. The assumption of honor thus becomes for many a temptation, and a chance for ruin.[109]

The ideal bishop edifies his flock by projecting his personal charisma onto his subjects through preaching and his own conduct: "Edify others not only by word, but by deed and example. . . . Edify your subjects with respect to their appearance, countenance, bearing, attire and gait."[110] The phrase *docere verbo et exemplo*, crucial to what Caroline Bynum has identified as the distinctive spirituality of regular canons, was indeed commonly used in Victorine and Cistercian writings, but Peter employs it here in a specifically episcopal context.[111] According to writers who invoked this formulation, a bishop needed to stand out before his people through the quality of his own life, and also needed to use his exceptional virtue for edification, not for profit. Peter's use of the expression likely recalls not so much regular canonical spirituality as the tradition of charismatic episcopal leadership that has been studied with particular reference to early cathedral schools.[112] Beneath Peter's conventional catalogues of virtues lies a complex interplay of several traditions.

The spiritual injunctions contrasting humility and pride have their material counterparts, particularly in the realm of vestments. In this respect Peter's treatise is comparable to Bernard's *De moribus*. "In these [virtues]," writes Peter "lies your glory, not in lavish clothing, not in many furnishings, not in piling up money, not in buildings and fields, nor in the acquisition of possessions, nor multitude of horses. . . ."[113] The bishop's

109. "Gloria enim praelati est, si se ipsum miserum judicat et infirmum, insufficientem oneri et honore indignum. Sunt qui honores virtutes reputant, suisque meritis ascribunt gradum eminentiae, quem in ira Dei fortassis adepti sunt. Honoris assumptio multis tentatio facta est et subversionis occasio": *Canon episcopalis*, 1102.

110. "Aedificat alios non solum verbo, sed opere et exemplo. . . . Aedifices subditos in vultu, aspectu, gestu, habitu, et incessu": *Canon Episcopalis*, 1102.

111. See Bynum, "The Spirituality of Regular Canons in the Twelfth Century," in *Jesus as Mother*, 22–58; Bynum, *Docere Verbo et Exemplo: An Aspect of Twelfth-Century Spirituality*, Harvard Theological Studies 13 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978). For an example of the phrase in Cistercian writing, see Martha G. Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity*, 164–65.

112. Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, 76–78.

113. "in his tibi gloriandi forma praefigitur, non in veste pretiosa, non in supellectili multa,

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leadership qualities ought to manifest themselves not in the construction of buildings but in the salvation of souls. Peter is clearly tapping into current rhetoric over the propriety of bishops leading works projects, and this letter recalls Letter 5, which claimed that many clerics criticized Richard of Dover for building *vivaria* and the like at Canterbury.

The first half of the tract thus presents a series of dichotomies governing proper and improper behavior in a prelate, leading ultimately to a distinction between the worldly and the spiritual. Like Peter Damian and Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter conceived of government as a dyarchic cooperation between Church and state. Here Peter stresses the distinctions between the two spheres. The bishop is a *minister non dominus*, with *officium pastoris non baronis*.[114] The dilemma of the courtly cleric again commands Peter's attention.

John of Coutances, the recipient of this tract, had experienced secular administration firsthand, but Peter warns rather than rebukes. Peter never fully resolves the contradictions between ideal and reality: they stand uncomfortably against one another. One of Bernard's recent translators has shrewdly remarked that the abbot's great achievement in the *De consideratione* was to write of the pope's duties in terms that recognized the paradox without attempting to deny the inherent contradictions of the office.[115] The situation of a curial bishop was different from that of the pope, but Peter still formulated his advice in a way that took into account the bishop's potential role as a possible royal servant and thus as a self-contradicting entity. According to decrees of various councils, holding royal office while a bishop was damnable. Peter could not get around such decrees and precedents cleanly, but he does manage to focus on the obligation of a bishop close to the centers of power to use his position for the benefit of his flock.

It behooves a soul to be free of secular concerns if it is consecrated to the obedience of holy servitude. You were dedicated to great things—do not be occupied by lesser. Minuscule and vile are whatever things pertain to the business of the world, and not to the profit of souls. If you should have secular affairs to deal with, as the Apostle says, bring those who are most contemptible among

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non in congregatione pecuniae, non in aedificiis aut culturiis, non in dilatandis possessionibus, non in equorum multitudine": *Canon episcopalis*, 1103. Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *De moribus et institutione episcoporum*, *S. Bernardi Opera*, 7:104.

114. *Canon episcopalis*, 1103, 1105. Cf. Bernard, *De moribus*, 7:103.

115. Elizabeth T. Kennan, introduction to *Five Books on Consideration: Advice to a Pope*, trans. John D. Anderson and Elizabeth T. Keenan, The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux 13 (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1976), 16.

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you to judgment [1 Cor: 6]. If, however, the case of a pauper, or an orphan, or a widow, should come to you, judge the poor with integrity, and give fair sentence for the humblest in the land [Is. 11:4]. Pass judgment for those suffering injury, procure peace for the lowly, obedience for rebels, quiet for cloisters, order for monasteries, discipline for the clergy.[116]

This passage suggests that Peter allows for a bishop involved in *negotia* to continue in them so long as he secures justice for his people by acting as a shield for the oppressed and an enforcer of ecclesiastical order, but he does withdraw his objections to a bishop's presence in worldly affairs. Peter never quite resolves the contradictions; perhaps he realized it would be impossible to do so. Shortly after the last passage, Peter warns John "to beware by all means lest you involve yourself in secular affairs."[117] He continues to voice the ideal, framing that ideal in terms of proper clerical *ordo:* "stay within your calling, according to the standard measure of the rule that God has set for you."[118] In principle, Peter clearly delineates proper duties based on one's profession. He gives this a personal and sacramental slant when he reminds John of the oaths required of the Church's servants, and that John himself had pledged his faith:

when you were elected into the ranks of the Lord, you renounced the ignominy of laymen. On the day of your consecration, however, you took the vows on the renunciation of *saecularia*, which your lips enunciated. You are bound by the words of your mouth, when you promised, upon being questioned by he who consecrated you, without any exception, that you would separate yourself from worldly business and from filthy profits, and that you would free your energies for divine business at all times. Why should you put off the cure of souls, even for a moment, for the Exchequer, or fiscal revenues? Did Christ choose you so that you could be a tax collector?[119]

In this mild rebuke Peter reminds John of his place in the world and his obligations, explicitly referring to his (and presumably his uncle's) involvement in the royal administration. Despite the interaction of patristic and monastic ideals throughout the tracts, the bishop's calling is starkly defined, and given further urgency through the ritual of consecration. Having thus called attention to the moment at which the bishop binds himself to service of the Church, Peter moves on in the final third

116. *Canon Episcopalis*, *PL* 207, 1105.

117. Ibid., 1106.

118. "Permane in vocatione tua, secundum mesuram regulae quo mensus est tibi Deus": 1107.

119. Ibid., 1107.

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of the tract to urge John to take an active part in looking out for the souls subject to his care, with a particular emphasis on the potential danger of the secular power. Here Peter's ideal dictates that a bishop place himself among the great secular leaders as a corrective to abuses of power and to ensure that true justice is served. He begins with an example from the early Church:

> We read that in the days of Constantine certain bishops, flattering their prince, displayed greater reverence for royal edicts than to the prescriptions of the Gospel. There are today those to whom the administration of the word of God is entrusted, who are silent and say nothing good, mute dogs who cannot bark, who do not even wish to bark. . . .[120]

This leads Peter to complain about the Church's impotence in serving justice, and the relative leniency of punishment meted out to those who defy her. A poor man is hanged for stealing to feed his family, while adulterers receive no punishment.[121] The royal legal system is deadly efficient, while the Church cannot keep its flock in order. The secular administration enforces justice by taking lives, while the Church, derelict in its duty, loses souls.

Now Peter clearly modifies some of his earlier exhortations to maintain cozy Church-state relations, warning that the Church should avoid, in certain cases, excessive cooperation with the royal authority, and that it should not tacitly assent to things it cannot rightfully perform itself. Once again repeating the sentiments of countless Church councils, he inveighs against churchmen who, following the example of Pilate, wash their hands of judgments of blood that they had a part in bringing about:

> It arouses heavenly anger, brings to many the danger of eternal damnation, that certain princes of the priesthood and elders of the people, who cannot pass judgments of blood, nevertheless carry them out by discussing and debating them, and they think themselves free from fault, because while they decree the judgment of death or severing of limbs, they simply absent themselves from the pronouncement and execution of the sentence. What can be more pernicious than this deception? Is it acceptable to discuss and delimit what it is not acceptable to pronounce? . . . You are the prelate for souls, not for bodies, and a prelate has nothing in common with Pilate. You are the *vilicus* of Christ, and the vicar of Peter; nor ought you to answer for the jurisdiction entrusted to you to Caesar, but to Christ. Certain men, when they usurp responsibility for things of this world fetter themselves to the chains of the court. . . .[122]

120. Ibid., 1107–8.
121. Ibid, 1108.
122. Ibid., 1109–10.

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The distinction between the values of *regnum* and *sacerdotium* is clearly defined, even as Peter shows that the two are intermingled in practice. For Peter, as for many reformers, mere deference to technical distinctions in legal procedure did not in itself create a pure and independent clergy. It will not do for a prelate to attempt, at least in the matter of judgments of blood, to participate in *saecularia negotia* innocently by quibbling over words. The story of Pilate washing his hands of the execution of Christ, which he had connived in for the scribes and Pharisees who could not legally put a man to death, is presented as an example of a pernicious cooperation between Church and state. Having denounced such cooperation, Peter moves on to set the Church against the state, urging bishops to resist those contemporary laws that are unjust, concluding his list of abominations with an attack on the royal hunting laws that take into account only the "immunity of beasts" and not the welfare of the populace:

> This is said to be no less absurd and destestable: that the immunity of churches is destroyed and the dignity of holy orders trampled underfoot, when certain princes of the earth think only about the immunity of their beasts, and as men groan under the anguish of slavery, stags, wild goats, hinds and hares exult in the right to total freedom. They freely feed off the gardens and reeds of the poor, and no one dares shoot arrows at them; for today the hateful law condemns men not only for the poaching of animals but for the simple suspicion of poaching them. The members which nature created for the propagation of humankind are severed, eyes are put out, even feet or hands may be cut off, and man, who was created in the image and likeness of God, is horribly deformed, a grave disgrace to his creator. The lord king did not make these and other laws, so hateful to God, but found them established . . . it would be much to the benefit of his eternal salvation if he, by your urging, either sought to repeal them entirely or in some way to moderate them.[123]

With magnificent prose Peter urges John to urge the king (again by imparting wisdom as an adviser) to reform customs that harm ordinary

123. "Illud nihilominus absurdum detestandumque dicitur, quod effracta ecclesiarum immunitate et dignitate sacri ordinis conculcata, quidam principes terrae de sola immunitate cogitant ferarum, et, hominibus gementibus inter serviles angarias, cervi, capreoli, damae et lepores privilegio summae libertatis exsultant. Pauperum segetes et hortos impune depascunt, nec est qui eos arcere praesumat; lex enim funesta homines hodie, non solum de captione ferarum, sed de simplici captionis suspicione condemnat. Succiduntur membra, quae in causam humanae propagationis natura creavit, effodiuntur oculi, pedes etiam manusque truncantur, et homo qui ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei creatus est, in sui Creatoris contumeliam horribiliter deformatur. Hanc quidem et alias odibiles Deo leges dominus rex non instituit, sed institutas invenit . . . ita domino regi cederent in praemium salutis aeternae, si eas, hortatu vestro, aut omnino delere studeret, aut ex parte aliqua tempararet": *Canon episcopalis*, 1110.

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Christians. The bishop is again a wise counselor and a voice of moderation, here acting directly on behalf of the people. While the dangers of a rapacious administration are only implied in much of Peter's writing on clerical court service, here the coercive power of the rising monarchy appears in all its brutality.[124] Drawing on traditional clerical uneasiness with mutilation and other harsh punishments, Peter shows the bishop why his place in twelfth-century society is important. As the tract nears its conclusion, Peter continues to delineate very explicitly the proper way for a bishop to situate himself in relation to the secular authority:

> You are placed among the princes of the people, among the conscript fathers, into whose hands are given swords to wreak vengeance on the nations [Ps. 149:7]. Rise therefore, man of God, rise from adversity, girding yourself for deeds of strength. Succor the injuries of the church. . . . With the sword of the tongue unsheathed, ride forth to do episcopal justice, according to the duty incumbent upon your profession.[125]

Ultimately the *Canon episcopalis* presents as its ideal a bishop who intervenes in secular government and does not stand aloof from it. In this respect Peter deployed elements of contemporary exegesis that found scriptural basis for obstructionist bishops.[126] Peter thus found a solution to the dilemma of the curialist bishop, but the ideals and accepted theories available to him do not allow him to articulate it as explicitly as one might like. The *Canon* allows the bishop to operate in curial circles by endowing him with a subversive apostolic quality. By introducing this potential for subversion into his tract, Peter declares that a bishop who truly leaves the court is in essence abandoning his flock, while too many contemporary bishops, opting for the other extreme, conspire with the royal power to fleece it. In reality, of course, no bishop would be at a court if not to serve the king, so Peter's synthesis was not entirely practical even if it did offer a conceptual reformulation of the clerical presence at court.

The tract comprehensively summarizes Peter's thought on the relationship between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*. He recognizes essentially one Church, a dyarchy with two spheres that ought to be distinct, but suggests that in the rough-and-tumble world of the royal court, whence are

124. John of Salisbury also criticized hunting parties in *Policraticus* 1.4, ed. Webb, 1:21–32. On the hunt as a symbol of the violence of the *regnum*, see Buc, *"Principes gentium dominantur eorum,"* 318–19; and the sources cited in A. Queffelec, "Représentation de la chasse chez les chroniqueurs anglo-normands du douzième siècle," in *La chasse au Moyen-Age: Actes du colloque de Nice, 22–24 juin 1979* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1980), 423–33.

125. *Canon episcopalis*, IIII.

126. Buc, *L'ambiguité du livre*, 354.

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issued judgments of blood and military orders, the bishop finds his true calling. He can use the defining mark of the cleric—wisdom—as well as Christ's compassion, to attack unjust laws and restrain violent monarchs. Peter combines the traditional role of the literate cleric with more novel ideas, such as the quest for an apostolic life of hardship and suffering, and so hints at a major shift in Christian ecclesiology that would be finally realized with the advent of Francis and Dominic.

The English episcopacy in the late twelfth century included a diverse assortment of men and hence could be described and exhorted using a diverse range of models. The Becket controversy brought into spectacular relief the image of the bishop who resisted royal authority and made himself a martyr for the Church. Not everyone approved of Becket's example when he lived, but few could resist the growth of his cult and his elevation to the status of emblem for ecclesiastical liberty. Though he never reached the episcopal grade himself, Peter of Blois was subject to the same pressures as the men whom he served and counted on for patronage. Perhaps because of his personal experience with the archbishops of Canterbury, Peter constructed his model for episcopal duty differently from that of any other clerical commentator. Unlike Gerald of Wales and Walter Map, for instance, he felt that monks could make good bishops; he presented his ideas in a group of context-specific pieces, and not in a general satire on the higher clergy. His own enthusiasm for the new monastic orders and his exposure to the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux also conditioned his ideal. He felt the force of the Becket controversy, as his letters to various figures involved in the dispute show, but only in the later issues of his letter collection does he advocate anything resembling an antagonistic posture toward the secular power. Thus, one can trace a certain degree of development in Peter's theories of episcopal duty, in that he moved away from the extreme advocacy of deference to kings displayed in some of his early letters. Equally comfortable with ideas of monastic, patristic, and regular canonical provenance, he synthesized a great number of strands from a number of traditions. The *compilator* balanced a number of streams of sometimes contradictory political theology in order to find a place for the bishop in the world. He founded his synthesis on an appeal to the most basic obligations of the pastor to teach and advise.

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Chapter Title: The Piety of a Secular Cleric

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma

Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century

Book Author(s): John D. Cotts

Published by: Catholic University of America Press

Stable URL: http://www.jstor.com/stable/j.ctt284z96.11

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6 *The Piety of a Secular Cleric*

In the first decade of the thirteenth century, as Innocent III tried to eradicate heresy and Francis of Assisi touched the wounds of lepers, as England suffered an interdict, and the schools of Paris approached their formal incorporation as a university, Peter of Blois thought about his career from London. As archdeacon he occupied a desirable stall in the choir, second in honor only to the dean of the chapter and the bishop himself. He continued to offer his opinion on the "knotty problems" of the realm and kept track of his prebends so as to preserve them from depredation, but he also continued to write. For half a century, Peter had watched the Cistercians' moral authority increase and then begin to ebb, had marveled at the new regular orders, especially the Carthusians, and had observed the outpouring of penitential thought that accompanied the fall of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade. Now he thought again about the balancing act he had performed when trying to infuse clerical service with a spiritual justification.

Of course, Peter had always written about the spiritual side of his profession, but his later writings brood a bit more, and hold out a little less hope that a pious life could be led in the world of time and action, the *saeculum*.[1] Still, he never would become the model of an old sage reconciled to his lot in the clerical world, and he never entirely retreated from that world. Rather than retire to a monastery, he continued to grapple with spiritual dilemmas outside the cloister. His works that might be termed "spiritual," insofar as they expound on charity, poverty, penance, or moral improvement, included a significant proportion of the later letters not included in

1. The best introduction to the Christian idea of the *saeculum* is still R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

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his primary letter collection, a moral commentary on Job, a series of exhortations to the Third Crusade, a treatise on Christian friendship, and tracts on confession and penitence. Yet Peter was not a spiritual writer in the sense that twelfth-century luminaries like Bernard of Clairvaux and Aelred of Rievaulx were. He never quite soared to the mystical heights attained by some of his contemporaries. It is not clear that he wanted to, or even thought himself capable of doing so. He certainly did not strive for a suprarational knowledge of the deity or an affective surrender to an ecstatic experience of the divine; instead he recounted the anxieties of an ordinary cleric in considerable fear for his soul.

He offered few original spiritual ideas or affective experiences, but he judged such themes as Christian friendship and eucharistic piety, so important to monastic writers, sufficiently valuable to write on them and to present them to an audience. Scholars who have viewed Peter through the prism of humanism and rhetoric have ignored this aspect of his corpus, or dismissed it as conventional or derivative.[2] But there is considerable interest in the mere fact that Peter chose, in his collected letters and tracts, to convey the spiritual ideas that he did. By doing so frequently in letters to monks and abbots, he mobilized a community of pious souls to pray for his salvation. Peter was a *compilator* not only of classical and patristic literature, but of spiritual traditions.

His piety and its literary realization cannot be separated from his career as a secular cleric. Peter saw the secular clergy as a distinct group with an important calling to preach the word and administer the sacraments. Particularly in the case of penance, Peter combined his understanding of the technical language of the sacraments with a sense of pastoral responsibility gained from his experience in both the schools and the world.

For the last half-century, studies of medieval religion have facilitated the identification of types of spiritual thinking and writing characteristic of particular groups, and such approaches have allowed historians to relate developments in religious thought to broader cultural and social trends. In one of the first widely influential discussions of group spirituality, for example, Jean Leclercq outlined a uniquely monastic culture whose fundamental characteristics stemmed from liturgical observance and cloistered devotions. Leclercq's *Love of Learning and the Desire for God* sketched a culture conditioned in part by the diurnal activities of those in the cloister.[3] Starting with similar assumptions about the im-

2. See above, introduction, notes 20 and 28.

3. Leclercq, *Love of Learning*. On the importance of the liturgy in these "diurnal activities," see esp. 236–54.

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portance of ecclesiastical groups to the development of twelfth-century religiosity, Caroline Walker Bynum has argued that the regular canons displayed a unique interest in teaching others "by word and example," an interest that laid the groundwork for a concept of active ministry and so "pointed toward the appearance of the friars in the early thirteenth century."[4] Vigorous wars of polemic between new monastic and canonical orders show that twelfth-century Christians recognized the impact and significance of new ecclesiastical options, as does the very acceptance of diversity by such observers as the anonymous author of the *Libellus de diversis ordinibus quae sunt in ecclesia*.[5] The rise of new forms of religious observance, of course, troubled many contemporaries, as the Fourth Lateran Council's prohibition against the founding of new religious orders clearly illustrates.[6]

Fitting a clerical writer like Peter into this set of historical developments presents some difficulties. The "monastic culture" of Leclercq's monks depended on the centrality of the liturgy to the intellectual life of the monasteries. As a cleric in the world, Peter could not have had this same experience of the liturgy, and could not have shared precisely the same spiritual anxieties, even if he admired and sometimes imitated monastic sentiments. His own ideas may indeed have derived from conventional expressions, but that Peter bothered to integrate ideas of monastic provenance into his own corpus implies that he sought to harness the spiritual energies of his age for his own purposes, that is, the purposes of a secular cleric.

Peter's appropriation and manipulation of received ideas also suggests that twelfth-century intellectual culture may have been even more dynamic and diverse than is often accepted. Thanks in part to the vigorous exchange of letters, traditions of thought permeated new groups and institutions and were shaped by them. Peter's letters and tracts develop a spiritual outlook at once conventional and deeply personal. Many, including Leclercq and Southern, have lamented the conventionality of Peter's religious feeling, but it seems, given the evidence from the works of such contemporaries as Walter Map and Gerald of Wales, that there was little that was properly speaking conventional in an urban archdeacon mimicking Aelred of Rievaulx and Baldwin of Ford. Peter's use of the spirituality

4. Bynum, "The Spirituality of Regular Canons," 58. For *caritas* as fundamental to Cistercian spirituality and social action, see Newman, *Boundaries of Charity*, 16–19, 123–40.

5. *Libellus de diversis ordinibus qui sunt in ecclesia*, ed. Giles Constable (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

6. Lateran IV, Canon 13, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Tanner, 1:242.

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of his century is furthermore destabilized at every turn by his personal position as a cleric caught between God and the world. His emphasis on penitence represents a point of contact between the spiritual dilemma of his own career and the sacramental theology of the twelfth century; his recurring penitential complaints throughout his life suggest that he had a compelling personal interest in exploring such theology. In the theology of penance Peter may have found at least something of a resolution to the continual tension between spiritual and worldly impulses that marked his career. While penitence could serve many writers as a literary trope, in the course of Peter's life we see that trope developing and appearing more urgently, for in his later years, as he approached death, penance became a pressing need.

Peter was an enterprising man of letters with an acute religious sensibility, but a writer for whom the term "spiritual" is not entirely appropriate, and perhaps not even useful. Just as his concerns as a professional ecclesiastical servant prevented him from assuming the character of a humanist engaged in an all-encompassing pursuit of classical learning, his immersion in the world exerted a certain pressure on his representations of his piety. Indeed, we might aptly call Peter a great exponent of clerical piety, with all the attendant contradictions and ambiguities, but to call him a "spiritual" writer in the sense in which the term is used to describe contemporary monastic writers would assume an orientation that Peter could not have possessed. Peter's piety, however, has recently impressed a number of historians, especially those working on the preaching of the Third Crusade. Jonathan Riley-Smith began an article on crusading as an act of love with a citation from Peter, and others, including Penny Cole and Paul Alphandéry, have attributed to Peter a keen sense of the spiritual side of holy war.[7] Moreover, Peter seems to have regarded it as a professional obligation to preach the Third Crusade. Clearly, the relationship between Peter's spiritual ideas and his position as a secular cleric (rather than a monk) was a reciprocal one. The present chapter will outline the stages through which Peter developed and expressed his piety in crusader treatises, moral commentaries, sermons, and later letters, with the final section placing Peter in the broader ecclesiastical context by exploring his attitudes toward and interactions with contemporary monasticism. While the evidence for Peter's piety comes from all stages of his

7. Riley-Smith, "Crusading as an Act of Love," 177; Penny J. Cole, *The Preaching of the Crusades to the Holy Land, 1095–1270* (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1991), 72–74; Paul Alphandéry, *La Chretienté et l'idée de Croisade*, 260–64. See also above, introduction.

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life, this piety changed and developed over time, stimulated both by his withdrawal from archiepiscopal and royal service and a consuming preoccupation with his own mortality.

The King, Job, and the Crusade

Peter of Blois's self-perception as a pious, religious man depended on the interaction of a variety of spiritual traditions with his distinctly clerical way of perceiving the religious life. The first phase in the development of Peter's piety included the period before and during the Third Crusade, from the mid-1170s to the mid-1190s. During this period Peter advised King Henry and dabbled in tropological exegesis, offered words of advice to his monarch, and wrote exhortations that he embark on the crusade as an act of charity and penance. The last few years of this period, as we have seen, saw Peter's prosecution of Baldwin's case against the monks of Christ Church and his repentance for his involvement in it. After this point, Peter spent more time writing to monks and about strictly religious themes, though he still had at least one eye on developments at court. Perhaps paradoxically, his association with the Cistercian monk Baldwin, which led to the legal case that brought Peter such regret, also helped expose him to new spiritual ideas, especially those usually associated with the cloistered orders. At the same time, the Third Crusade provided Peter with an urgent religious cause, one that may have encouraged a deepening of his own piety. He thoroughly overhauled his letter collection soon after 1191, suggesting that some change had occurred in his outlook in the immediately preceding years. Indeed, the contradictions and ambiguities that exist side by side in his letters seem to have come to a head at this time. His presence at the papal curia (where he was representing Archbishop Baldwin's interests) exposed him to the most current reforming ideals, including voluntary poverty and personal penitence, all of which took on new importance in his writings. In addition, Peter's tracts, especially his *Dialogus inter regem Henricum secundum et abbatem Bonevallis*, possess an introspective air that adds greatly to their literary effect. The treatises that Peter wrote during this period demonstrate the extent to which Peter not only internalized but adapted and transformed the characteristic late twelfth-century preoccupation with interiority, poverty, and penitence.

Sometime between 1174 and 1180 Peter dedicated his *Compendium in Job* to Henry II, praising the king thus: "while you avoid the cauldron of courtly cares and the intricate labyrinths of business, you reflect on

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the law of God and take refuge from daily labors through the reading of the divine page."[8] The *Compendium,* then, is a self-consciously courtly work perfectly in line with Peter's opinion that the cleric at court ought to advise a monarch on how to live piously. The prologue to the commentary reveals that he had already presented two works to the king, the mostly unremarkable *De conversione Sancti Pauli* and *De transfiguratione,* and that he fancied himself something of an official spiritual advisor.[9] He had placed himself in the same position when writing about his service to William II of Sicily.[10]

By writing a book that was essentially an adaptation of Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job,* Peter followed many twelfth-century theological writers, including the Victorine canons, and monks including Guibert of Nogent, William of St. Thierry, and Rupert of Deutz, all of whom bore a debt to Gregory's exegetical method. Like Guibert (who regarded his reading of the *Moralia* as essential to his personal reform) and Rupert, Peter concentrated almost exclusively on tropological, or moral, commentary.[11] He presented the king with an abbreviation of Gregory's work and adapted the story of Job's sufferings to the vicissitudes of court life. The resulting book enjoyed wide circulation, and is one of a small number of works that circulated independently of his letter collection, although it often appears along with the letters.[12] A thirteenth-century Old French verse translation provides additional testimony to the work's popularity.[13] The work sets out to present Job as a model for dealing with adversity, and follows Gregory the Great's model closely in using Jobian commentary to prescribe Christian behavior. Presenting the book to Henry, Peter admits both his debt to Gregory and the lightweight nature of his own work:

because it is at your pleasure, most invincible King, that I put together a life of holy Job with succinct and rushed brevity, I pass over his words and the

8. "dumque curialium sollicitudinum frixoria et intricatos negotiorum labyrinthos evaditis, libenter meditamini in lege Domini et de diurnis laboribus in lectione sacrae paginae respiratis": *Compendium in Job,* ed. Gildea, xix–xx.

9. Ibid., xx.

10. See above, chapter 4, note 25.

11. See René Wasselynck, "L'influence de l'exégèse de S. Grégoire le Grand sur les commentaires bibliques médiévaux (VIIe–XIIe s.)," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 32 (1965): 173–204. For Rupert of Deutz borrowing from one of Gregory's homilies, see Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe,* 2:16.

12. A list of over one hundred and thirty manuscripts of the *Compendium* appears in Joseph Gildea, "Extant Manuscripts of *Compendium in Job* by Peter of Blois," *Scriptorium* 30 (1976): 285–87.

13. The Old French version appears in Gildea's edition.

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responses of his friends and the hidden murmurs of the sacraments in them, fearing that I might offend Your Excellency's delicate ears by a protracted account if I should attempt to cross such an immense sea. Indeed the most blessed Pope Gregory explains all this, right down to the fingernail [*ad unguem*], in his *Moralia;* and it should not be doubted that that tract was written by the finger of God in the heart of that man who made it known with such an angelic mode of writing, as a preaching dove. And so it falls to me to shorten such a long work into a *compendium*. . . .[14]

Indeed, Peter does not take on the whole of Job but the first two chapters and parts of the third and forty-second. This is tropological exegesis made palatable to the king. The passage also reveals much about his attitude toward exegesis: it needs to be short, moral, and practical—presumably he had no time to prepare a proper commentary. He admits that he passes over whatever the book of Job might say allegorically about the sacraments in order to stay on the task at hand, which is to advise the king on how to lead a good Christian life amid the sycophants and other pressures of the royal court.

Despite his attempts to keep the *Compendium* short, it is one of Peter's more ponderous works, with little sense of spontaneity and without the brooding meditative brilliance of Gregory's original commentary on Job. The anxious moral urgency of Peter's best writing appears, but only sparsely. Instead the reader finds a somewhat heavy-handed and conventional explication of Job, often taking the *distinctio* method of textual explication to tedious extremes.[15] Peter presents himself as a cleric advising the monarch, but, since he seldom refers to external events, there is little distinctive about that advice. Within the schema, however, Peter manages to include a great deal of basic moral prescription. He warns Henry of the transience of secular kingship and the need for humility: "Where is Caesar now?"[16] Peter occasionally refers to the ecclesiastical world around him, lamenting Church corruption and leveling an attack on monastic wealth.[17] Job's handling of adversity, of course, figures prominently throughout the work, and Peter calls him no less than an *exemplum tonsurae*—a model for clerical behavior, and so an ideal for the good life.[18] In the second half of the work, however, Peter focuses on the popular matters of penitence and humility, which became increasingly crucial

14. *Compendium in Job,* ed. Gildea, 260–64.

15. On *distinctiones* (used to explain multiple, generally three, potential meanings of a given word or phrase, one by one), see below.

16. *Compendium,* 140.

17. Ibid., 30.

18. Ibid., 130.

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to his writings late in life. His approach in the *Compendium* is entirely traditional: "There are two things that marvelously save a man from sin: frequent confession and even more frequent discipline."[19] Occasionally, he offers glimpses of the introspective, anxious penitent that surfaces in so much of his writing on the court:

> When I applied the medicine of penance to the wounds of my soul, and with the aid of confession and satisfaction turned the wounds into scars, nonetheless afterwards, as I regressed back to the same and returned to my own vomit, my grief emerged again.[20]

Peter wrote these lines by 1180, before the great displays of penitence that accompanied his withdrawal from the court or his failure in the legal case surrounding the Hackington collegiate church. Earlier in his life, penitence was already a fact of life and a somewhat conventional sentiment that he could work into his writing. This fact of life, however, would take on increasing significance as Peter grew older.

The *Compendium* also refers to his studies in Paris and his dabbling in the law, with a hint of remorse, but in general this tract possesses little of the introspective energy that he brought to the topic elsewhere.[21] The tract concludes by once again emphasizing repentance and urging Henry to "walk the path of penance."[22] Peter thus combines the twelfth-century interest in moral commentary, the use of *distinctiones* for textual explication, and the contemporary concern with confession and penance that would be treated in the canons of Lateran IV. The *Compendium* treads familiar ground while keeping the sin and adversity that give the book of Job its moral interest at something of a distance.

Toward the unhappy end of Henry's life, however, Peter revisited the subject of a Christian king's need to face adversity piously, and in so doing created perhaps his most distinctive literary achievement outside of his letter collection. Extant in only two manuscripts, the *Dialogus inter regem Henricum secundum et abbatem Bonevallis* reveals an aging, bewildered, but still cunning Henry II faced with the rebellion of his sons, military setbacks, and his own mortality. References to the recent fall of Jerusalem indicate that the work was written between October 1187 and early 1189, when Henry's world, along with his dominion, was falling apart.[23] It is an embittered, flustered Henry who appears as a character in Peter's dialogue, discussing justice and mercy with the abbot of Bonneval. This

19. Ibid., 148.
20. Ibid., 202–4.
21. Ibid., 186–88.
22. Ibid., 274.
23. On this period in Henry's life, see Warren, *Henry II*, 615–26.

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prose dialogue does not set out merely to oppose two points of view and judge their merits; it has as its focus Henry's soul and how he may reconcile the conflicts within it. Peter refrains from painting Henry as a caricature of a ruined king seeking vengeance on his enemies. This is a most Christian king, trying to feel in his heart the mercy that he should, but not quite able to do so. In many ways the *Dialogus* is a truly unique work among the dialogues of the century. Debate poems were common (Peter's corpus of poetry contains two), and a rich prose tradition of dialogues on matters of faith, especially on the relative merits of Christianity and Judaism, developed in the course of the century.[24] Medieval dialogues in general served to resolve a problem, or determine which of two propositions was correct. But Peter's dialogue is not a dry presentation of theological tenets leading to an inevitable conclusion. The conflict of Peter's dialogue takes place not between rival Scholastic positions but within the mind of a troubled king, and is never completely resolved. For inspiration, Peter could well have drawn on an actual conversation between the two characters, but stylistically the work is Peter's own.[25] The abbot of the work perfectly fits the model of the religious man chastising a king to which Peter appeals throughout his letters, and as such becomes a perfect mouthpiece for Peter's gentle moral prescription.

In both extant manuscripts, the piece begins without introduction or salutation. The character of Henry II is made immediately to voice a lament for his political and familial situation, and displays a remarkable ability to string together biblical citations to make his point:

> I have nurtured and exalted my sons, but they spurn me [Isaiah 1:2]. My friends and neighbors oppose me, and I have found that the servants and allies I thought I had are in fact cruel enemies and unfaithful sinners. But God, the Lord of vengeance [Ps. 93:1], let God take revenge on my enemies and those who long for my destruction.[26]

Henry is not so much interested in a major change in his fortunes as in revenge, but Peter's treatment of the monarch's rage is remarkably subtle, and makes clear that Henry is circumspect rather than irrationally vengeful. The abbot chides Henry for his *turbatio mentis* and reminds him of

24. See Edmund Reiss, "Conflict and Its Resolution in Medieval Dialogues," in *Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge*, Actes de quatrième congrès de philosophie médiévale (Montreal and Paris, 1969), 863–72.

25. On this question, see R. C. B. Huygens's introduction to his edition of the *Dialogus*, in *Serta Mediaevalia: Textus varii saeculorum X–XV in unum collecti* CCCM 176 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 1:384–86; and Southern, "Peter of Blois and the Third Crusade," 209.

26. *Dialogus inter regem Henricum secundum et abbatem Bonevallis*, ed. Huygens, 307.

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the dangers of judging other men. When Henry recalls his reading of the Old Testament and its kings who so adeptly (and frequently) wrought vengeance on their enemies, and also cites provisions for punishment of sinners in Exodus and Deuteronomy, the abbot reminds him that he is not a Jew but a follower of Christ. But Peter does not dwell on reconciling the New and the Old Testaments. Indeed, very few of Henry's appeals to Scripture are definitively overruled in the course of the dialogue. Instead, Henry explains his dilemmas, and the abbot rebukes him mildly. Henry admits "whatever you may find in the Gospel or any other scriptures, I cannot find it in my heart to bless my persecutor or love my enemy. That is for a more perfect life."[27] After all, he reasons, what is more natural than anger? The abbot agrees and goes further, painting an Augustinian landscape of sin, angst, and misery on this earth, but adding that the king must endure all this and more.

Henry acknowledges the wisdom of the abbot's words, but then goes on to emphasize how difficult it is to be a king. Magnates and clerics alike hang on him night and day, to the point that, as much as he would like to fulfill his obligations as a Christian, he barely has time to say two *paternosters* a day.[28] As is so often the case in Peter's corpus, the court provides crucial background to a moral dilemma. Moreover, Henry claims, if he practices the virtues the abbot preaches, it will surely undermine his authority. The dialogue from this point becomes far more than a literary formality, for both characters speak at length, and for the most part Henry does not allow himself to be browbeaten. In a manner that anticipates Peter's later advice to John of Coutances in the *Canon episcopalis*, the abbot presents a new definition of the king's *negotia*, as a set of duties in which the poor take precedence. Responding to Henry's all-consuming anxiety over the succession to the throne, the monk suggests he look beyond dynastic concerns: "If you want to have heirs, make the poor of Christ your heirs."[29] When responding to this point, Henry goes on the defensive, reminding the abbot of his plans for a crusade and his gifts to churches, but the abbot is relatively unimpressed given that kings so often "despoil one altar to build another."[30] The abbot directly relates Henry's own salvation to adherence to a model of kingship that

27. Ibid., 390.

28. Ibid., 396.

29. "Si vis heredes habere, fac tibi heredes pauperes Christi": Ibid., 399. The *pauperes Christi* could, of course, refer to the monastic orders, but nearby references to widows and orphans suggest that Peter has in mind the giving of alms to the poor rather than to religious houses.

30. Ibid., 400–401.

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encompasses not only the usual business and struggles at court, but also care for the salvation of the people. In this way the abbot sets himself as not only a pastor, but a master, for he leads Henry through the scriptural passages that will lead to right behavior and peace of mind. The abbot places himself in the role of teacher to the world, much in the manner of charismatic Scholastic masters.[31]

Henry, for his part, seems both resigned to his predicament and frustrated by it:

> I am well versed in prayers and the other things I need to do to have the grace of God, but I have never known how to hang onto the habit, and I will gladly listen, father, to how I might do this.[32]

The dialogue becomes a lesson in confession and penance, for the abbot replies that *pura confessio oris et operis satisfactio* are the keys to Henry's salvation. After confessing his sins to the abbot ("the entire life of a soldier is lived in sin"),[33] the king suggests his own penance: a crusade to Jerusalem. "Would not," he asks, "the journey to Jerusalem be sufficient for the salvation and satisfaction the sins of him who has confessed and is truly penitent?"[34] The struggle over Henry's soul has become a piece of crusading literature that synthesizes several ideological and institutional traditions. Peter again employs the language of the schools to discuss penance, and here particularly shows his familiarity with the *Decretum*'s insistence that penitence be sincere and not feigned. The abbot does not force Henry into an act of penance: the king proposes it himself. Henry, of course, had long been talking about crusading. He had first promised to take the cross in 1172 and had levied a crusading tax six years before that.[35] His invocation of crusading makes perfect sense as a sequel to his complaints about unruly sons, for Henry's crusading politics had always been intertwined with familial strife. The revolt of the Young King in 1173 led the pope to release him from his vow (on the condition that he found

31. See Mia Münster-Swendsen, "The Model of Scholastic Mastery in Northern Europe, 970–1200," 338–42.

32. "multotociens expertus sum et in orationibus et in necessitatibus meis quod habeam gratiam dei, sed numquam novi retinere aut servare habitam, et qualiter hoc possem facere, pater, a tua sanctitate libenter audirem": *Dialogus inter regem Henricum secundum et abbatem Bonnevallis*, 402.

33. Ibid., 406.

34. "nonne via Iersolimitana posset vere confessis et penitentibus pro omni satisfactione sufficere ad salutem?": Ibid., 407.

35. Hans Eberhard Mayer, "Henry II of England and the Holy Land," *English Historical Review* 97 (1982): 722.

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three religious houses). The younger Henry, moreover, shrewdly made his own crusading vows at politically expedient times.[36]

This introduction to the topic of the crusade is both effective and instructive, for it portrays the king as a sinner in need of penance, who orally confesses his sin and then offers to atone for it. Out of Henry's anxiety for his precarious political and dynastic situation, and his protestations of the impossibility of being at once truly holy and truly a king, emerges the conclusion that a king can mobilize his military strength on behalf of the Church but in the interest of his own soul. The abbot's role in the dialogue is partially to find a proper outlet for Henry's anger, to dissipate the danger of his desire for vengeance, but the appeals to the king's soul and to Henry's own perspicacity in approaching his situation allow for a subtle and complex treatment of the royal dilemma through self-examination.[37]

The dialogue starts with the Job-like problem of how one ought to deal with worldly adversity and proceeds introspectively. It is significant, and probably not accidental, that the dialogue bears no dedication; it would, indeed, be a strange work to dedicate to a king. Peter has taken the same problem confronted in the *Compendium in Job* and given it greater urgency and deeper psychological significance, as the king struggles to come to terms with the crises surrounding him. The straightforward moral prescription of the *Compendium* here appears in a more mature, nuanced treatment. Peter, perhaps projecting his own experience in weighing irreconcilable opposites, proves himself a master at the dialogue form, allowing both speakers to make extended speeches and having Henry only gradually be won over by the abbot's spiritual warnings. The issue of vengeance, presented as an undeniable royal prerogative, is never completely put to rest, nor does Henry receive any truly helpful advice about dealing with the magnates and clerical hangers-on who make his job so difficult. Peter acknowledges the difficulties faced by the king, but ultimately advises a penitential military pilgrimage as his only concrete solution. The dialogue never resolves all of the problems it presents, and in this respect it is about Peter as much as it is about Henry. It is this personal aspect, this clear incorporation of some the anxiety of one who, like Henry, lived in the world and sinned, that allows for a far more complex

36. Ibid., 722, 730–32.

37. On the question of aristocratic anger, see Richard E. Barton, "'Zealous Anger' and the Renegotiation of Aristocratic Relationships in Twelfth-Century France," in *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara Rosenwein (Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 160–61.

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and forceful treatment of the subject of perseverance and penance than was possible in the earlier *Compendium*.

Henry's introspection, then, leads to the promise of military action in the form of the Third Crusade, a promise he did not live to fulfill. In the printed editions the *Dialogus* ends abruptly, before the proposed crusade is discussed in any detail. The last sentence, spoken by the abbot, is an incomplete thought: "I, however, in order to explain the anguish of grief replete with tears, assume the words of the prophet."[38] The text in Lambeth Palace 105, the only manuscript known until the beginning of the twentieth century, ends at this point.[39] However, the anticipated quotation from Jeremiah in fact occurs in the other of the two extant manuscripts, Bodleian Lat. misc. f. 14. The quotation appears immediately afterward, but in red with a large capital, while in the margin is written, also in red, *Conquestio de dilatione viae hierosilimitanae*.[40] There follows Peter's tract on the Third Crusade printed in the *PL* as *De hierosolymitana peregrinatione* (referred to here as the *Conquestio*). Southern, the first to comment on this manuscript, concluded that Peter intended the two tracts to form a unity.[41] To account for the Lambeth version, which, although it has several divergent readings, does not appear to be a discrete version of the *Dialogus*, Southern suggested that Peter truncated the work himself after the failure of the crusade, but the omission of the exhortation to the crusade could just as easily be the result of a copyist's decision. At any rate, the *Dialogus* nowhere appears in manuscripts of Peter's letter collections (perhaps because of its less-than-flattering portrayal of Henry II's sons), while in the early 1190s Peter converted the exhortation into an epistolary tract that found wide circulation as a part of the later issues of the letters.[42] Given that the lament on the fall of Jerusalem essentially completes the thought that ends the *Dialogus*, it seems almost certain that Peter initially intended the two pieces as one work. The manuscript tradition thus tells us that Peter saw crusading as a solution to mankind's political and spiritual dilemmas alike, and as a dignified response of an aging king to the collapse of his world.

The *Conquestio*, which the Bodleian manuscript seems to present as a speech by the character of the abbot of Bonneval, abandons the dia-

38. "ego vero ut possim singultuosi doloris angustias explicare liberius verba prophete lamentatoris assumam": *Dialogus*, 408.

39. Lambeth Palace MS 105 (s. xiii), f. 133r.

40. Bodleian MS Lat. misc. f. 14 (s. xiii) f. 15v.

41. Southern, "Peter of Blois and the Third Crusade," 213–14; cf. Huygens, introduction to *Petri Blesensis Tractatus Duo*, ed. Huygens, CCCM 194 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 15.

42. Southern, "Peter of Blois and the Third Crusade," 208–11.

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logue form and, after an emotional lament over the fall of Jerusalem, inveighs against Christian kings who had taken the cross but delayed their departure.[43] Continuing the theme of the *Dialogus*, Peter portrays the Christians' sufferings as sent by God, just like Henry's familial conflicts. Only the truly contrite, however, are entitled to full satisfaction for their sins through this act of penance. "We have sinned, but with a contrite and humble heart we may implore mercy after the wrath."[44] The sins of the Church are directly responsible for Jerusalem's captivity. "Jerusalem," urges Peter, addressing the body of the faithful as well as the holy city itself, "take up the arms of penitence."[45] Penance can thus be a military endeavor. In this respect Peter closely follows Bernard of Clairvaux, and so participates in a wider movement that tied crusading to both penance and personal reform. "The undertaking of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem would be the consummation of penance," writes Peter, echoing the sentiments of Bernard of Clairvaux, Eugenius III, and other earlier preachers.[46] As Michael Markowksi points out, Peter also links the crusading ideal to voluntary poverty and portrays ideal crusaders as *pauperes Christi*, which presumably reflects the influence of *Audita tremendi*, the bull of Gregory VIII that called for the Third Crusade, as well as works by other writers at the papal curia.[47] Peter was nothing if not a literary opportunist, and he immediately joined a circle of Roman writers concerned with preaching the new crusade. The ideas of the reformers at Rome, as well as his own employer Baldwin of Ford, the archbishop of Canterbury, provided added force for his own growing obsession with writing about penance. Peter's old friend and correspondent, Henry of Albano, a cardinal and intimate of Gregory VIII, wrote some of the earliest exhortations to the crusade and was selected to preach the cause in Germany because of his feverish devotion to liberating the Holy Land.[48] In the midst of all this preaching and thinking about the crusade at Rome, Peter almost

43. See Hans Eberhard Mayer, "Henry II of England and the Holy Land," 721–39.

44. "peccavimus, sed corde contrito et humiliato post iracundiam misericordiam imploramus": *Conquestio de dilatione vie ierosolimitane*, in *Petri Blesensis Tractatus Duo*, 78.

45. "Ierusalem, accipe arma poenitentiae": Ibid., 80.

46. "et auctoritate Ecclesiae generali proposuerat Dominus in hoc signo verbum reconciliationis, ut vie Ierosolymitanae assumptio esset poenitentia consummata, et sufficiens satisfactio de commissis": Ibid., 80–81. On Bernard, Eugenius, et al., see James A Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader* (Madison, Milwaukee, and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 145–53. See also Penny Cole, *The Preaching of the Crusades*, 142–76.

47. Michael Markowski, "Peter of Blois and the Conception of the Third Crusade," in *The Horns of Hattin*, ed. B. Z. Kedar (London: Variorum, 1992), 266–67.

48. On Henry of Albano, see Elizabeth Siberry, *Criticism of Crusading 1095–1274* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 53–54.

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certainly sought to participate in a Roman circle of crusade propagandists through his *Conquestio* and other writings, but he also continued a strand of thought present in earlier writings like the *Compendium in Job*. His own interests thus combine with contemporary trends to produce an emotionally wrought, pious exhortation to the period's distinctive military adventure.

Peter had learned of the fall of Jerusalem in 1187, at the papal curia, where he was prosecuting Baldwin's legal case against the Christ Church monks on the matter of the collegiate church at Hackington. He immediately wrote to Henry II with the news and, in a letter included in "Benedict of Peterborough's" *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, urged the king to take the cross immediately. This letter, which Peter left out of his letter collection, describes the scene at the curia: the king of Sicily was in sackcloth, while the cardinals dressed as paupers before working on strategies for preaching the crusade.[49]

Peter lost no time in making several contributions to the genre of crusading literature. Along with the *Conquestio*, he wrote a somewhat farfetched pseudohagiography for Reginald of Châtillon, the hot-headed ruler of Antioch who was executed by Saladin after the battle of Hattin.[50] Peter probably heard the account of the battle and of Reginald's martyrdom when the Roman curia first learned of the disaster, and he immediately tried to turn the somewhat unpopular and allegedly profligate Reginald into a hero. This tract, titled *Passio Reginaldi*, describes Reginald's purity of heart and attachment to voluntary poverty, as well as the heroic confession of faith before Saladin that led to his death. Although Peter does not explicitly make the connection, the penitent, humble Reginald is essentially the same ideal crusader that the abbot of the *Dialogus* urged Henry to be.

The *Passio Reginaldi* concludes with a letter written to a great prelate, certainly Peter's employer Baldwin of Ford, archbishop of Canterbury, exhorting him to take up the crusade.[51] He claims that as archbishop Baldwin has an obligation to preach because "Jericho was destroyed with the clamor of trumpets."[52] The cleric, then, by exhorting Christians to fight for the Holy Land, could truly realize his vocation. In crusading Peter's

49. *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, ed. Stubbs, RS 49.2 (London, 1867), 15.

50. On Reginald, see Bernard Hamilton, "The Elephant of Christ: Reynald of Châtillon," in *Religious Motivation: Biographical and Sociological Problems for the Church Historian*, ed. Derek Baker, Studies in Church History 15 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 97–108. On the unique nature of Peter's *Passio*, see Huygens, introduction to *Petri Blesensis Tractatus Duo*, 16.

51. Printed as the final part of the *Passio Reginaldi*, in *Petri Blesensis Tractatus Duo*, 64–73.

52. Ibid., 68.

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clerical piety found its perfect vehicle, since not only did it provide an act of penance for both King Henry and sinners like himself, but it required well-spoken, articulate clerics to preach the word. Peter's contemporary Gerald of Wales saw this as well, and in fact it was he who wrote the classic account of Baldwin on his preaching tour of Wales. Charter evidence indicates that Peter and Gerald both attended Baldwin for at least part of the journey.[53] Perhaps, as Southern has suggested, Peter and Gerald engaged in something of a competition for Baldwin's favor, and Peter's letter to Baldwin represented an attempt to put himself at the forefront of the crusading movement in England.[54] Whatever his motive, Peter used the crusade as a means to wake up clerics and kings alike from spiritual complacency, to save their souls by saving Jerusalem.

Peter clearly left England, probably in the company of Richard I, with the intention of reaching the Holy Land, but, if he completed the pilgrimage, his later letters never mention it. A letter to Hubert Walter from the 1190s refers to Peter's return from "a pilgrimage I made," but the term *peregrinatio* also means exile, including what he saw as his own exile from his native France.[55] In the *Passio*, however, Peter seems to suggest firsthand experience when he claims that

> I have made no alteration in the words of the prince [Reginald], but have recorded them in that simplicity with which they were reported both by word of mouth and in writing to the lord pope and to many who were present at the time, and finally as they were expressed to the archbishop of Canterbury and to us who were likewise present, in person, by the brother of the king of Jerusalem [Amalric] who was captured at the same time.[56]

Since he could only have met Amalric in Acre in 1190, Southern argued that Peter must have been there. He furthermore claimed that Peter wrote the treatise initially without the Amalric passage, but added it after his trip to the Holy Land.[57] It therefore seems altogether possible that

53. See above, chapter 1, note 99.

54. Southern, "Peter of Blois and the Third Crusade," 214.

55. "habebam in votis post peregrinationem, quam feci, venire ad vos": *Ep.* 109, *PL* 207, 332. On Peter's use of *peregrinatio* for exile see *Ep.* 123, *PL* 207, 364: "nondum tamen in hac peregrinatione mea valeo ad plenum oblivisci populum meum et domum."

56. "Circa verba principis nichil prorsus inmuto, sed in illa simplicitate, in qua domino pape at multis, qui tunc aderant, relata et scripta sunt, tandem a fratre regis Ierosolimitani, qui ibidem captus est, Canutariensi archiepiscopo et nobis, qui pariter aderamus, vive vocis officio apertius declarata, eadem memorie scripturie commendo": *Passio Reginaldi*, 51. The translation up to *captus est* is Southern's.

57. Southern, "Peter of Blois and the Third Crusade," 216, citing Bodleian lat. misc. f. 14, ff. 43 v., and *PL* 207, 969.

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Peter was in fact in Baldwin's party at Acre. Huygens, in his introduction to the *Passio*, agrees that Peter must have gone to Acre, but rejects Southern's thesis that the crusading tracts were significantly revised.[58]

There is still the problem of Peter's relative silence about the crusade. None of his extant letters describe his experience there, and he never put his letter to Henry II on the subject in his letter collection. Perhaps Peter's antipathy toward Richard I or his bitterness over the crusade's failure to take Jerusalem caused him to remove references to it from his letters, but that is sheer speculation. The crusade affected Peter nonetheless. For a moment in his life, spanning the years 1187–1191, when he faced remorse over his own duties in the world, along with the successive deaths of Henry (1189) and Baldwin (1190), Peter had a cause to which he could devote himself that provided an outlet both for his personal penitential impulses and for his conception of clerical duty. The crusade encouraged his piety, but when it was over, he left it behind, and he moved on to brood on the concerns of an aging ecclesiastic enduring what he saw as an exile from his homeland.

Penitence, Preaching, and the Priesthood

In the years following the crusade and Archbishop Baldwin's death in the Holy Land, Peter of Blois spent less time at the Canterbury curia, though he continued to travel in the circles of important men like William de Longchamps and Walter of Coutances, as well as one woman, Eleanor of Aquitaine. The period from just after the Third Crusade until his transfer to the archdeaconry of London around 1200 marks a second phase in Peter's piety, characterized by a further development of the idea of penance and a new emphasis on the sacramental duties of clerics. While Peter's days as an active member of the Canterbury curia were essentially over, his career continued to evolve. Despite having held deacon's orders since at least his elevation to the archdeaconry of Bath in the early 1180s, Peter had never received ordination as a priest. As he became increasingly anxious for his own salvation, he weighed the possibility of advancing to the full dignity of *sacerdos*, and his letters suggest that he took the prospect of ordination very seriously. Through his deliberations Peter reveals much about how he conceived of his own piety and how he fitted into the

58. Huygens, introduction to *Petri Blesensis Tractatus Duo*, 20–21. He argues that, although Peter had added the passages about Amalric to "seinem eigenen Exemplar der *Passio*," nonetheless "Es kann keine Rede davon sein, dass diese Gruppe [of manuscripts containing these passages] eine von Peter selbst besorgte, revidierte 'Neuauflage' überliefere."

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wider world of the Church as he approached his seventies. At the same time that he assumed the sacerdotal dignity, Peter became a defender of the faith against Jews and heretics, as well as something of a sacramental theologian, producing the majority of his spiritual and theological writings at this point in his life.

Sometime in the 1190s, while Peter was still archdeacon of Bath, Richard FitzNeal, the bishop of London (1189–1198), made known his wish that Peter enter the priesthood. Politely declining the request, he outlines his view of the role of priests in contemporary society, along with his own role as an archdeacon in deacon's orders. Peter's first and most vigorous argument against joining the sacerdotal order depends on the awe he felt toward the sacramental functions of the priesthood and his own sense of inadequacy.

> The priest needs to feel not only that he empties himself through humility, but also that, reproducing the crucifixion of the Lord, he carries His wounds in his own body, and on the altar of his heart he crucifies himself for God. . . . The Apostle says, let a man test himself, so that he might eat the bread and drink from the cup [1 Cor. 11]. How happy he who is found approved! Examine me, Lord, and tempt me, test my heart and my mind in the fire [Ps. 26:2], so that I might be found worthy of such a sacrament.[59]

Peter's highly personal view of the Eucharist leads to trepidation at the thought of administering it. His adoration of the wounds of Christ, and his insistence that the priest suffer them, places Peter squarely in the tradition of *imitatio Christi* that would reach its fullest expression with St. Francis. But while Francis's piety began as lay piety, Peter's *imitatio Christi* operates squarely within the sacramental functions of the priest.[60]

Peter goes on to lament that the contemporary priesthood, despite its ever increasing size, is filled with "innumerable illiterates, or rather ignoramuses," and has not provided Peter with particularly good examples to follow.[61] He continues with a strong, reform-minded denunciation of the twelfth-century priesthood, whose members are unconcerned with the gravity of their vocation and are haphazard in their treatment of the Lord's body and blood. After a long string of patristic and scriptural quotations relating to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, Peter returns to the

59. *Ep.* 123, *PL* 207, 359.

60. On these developments, see Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*, esp. 7–30; and Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978).

61. "illitteratos, aut potius idiotas": *Ep.* 123, 360.

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matter of his own deferred ordination. Quoting Exodus on the need to be forgetful of one's parents, Peter admits that "although I have fled a long way from my kin, I nonetheless am not ready, on this my pilgrimage [*peregrinatio*], completely to forget my people and the home of my father."[62] While the "people" and "father" in question may have some metaphorical or ecclesiastical significance, Peter is most likely referring to his dealings with his relatives, which several letters from the late 1190s and 1200s recount. In a later letter he discussed his father's property and argued that he had direct control over it.[63]

At any rate, Peter was for the moment satisfied with deacon's orders, and he recounts his steadfast refusal to be elevated to the priesthood in the face of urgent appeals from past archbishops of Canterbury. "I anxiously waited," he claims, "for an opportunity for exile or an occasion for martyrdom, so I might devoutly assist those who, following the example of blessed Thomas, fought in the arena of this world."[64] Peter fancied himself a devoted son to his fathers, the archbishops. "If he hastened to the fight without me, I would say to my lord and father: [quoting Ambrose] 'where are you going without your son, father? To where does the priest rush without his minister?'"[65] The true calling of this archdeacon, in his own words, is that of the servant, or even what an uncharitable commentator might deem a henchman. During the Mass, the duty of those in deacon's orders is not to complete the sacrament but "humbly to assist." Just as Peter served Richard and Baldwin loyally in the curia, he will serve a priest loyally in administering the Eucharist. "And how is it absurd, if deacons, and especially archdeacons persevere in this order? The order of archdeacons is prescribed by the canons."[66] Peter then embarks upon a long defense of the dignity of archdeacons, which was a concern of his for both moral and professional reasons. Peter had previously needed to defend himself from charges of immorality, and here he justifies his role in the life of the Church by pointing to the necessity of archdeacons. After all, he argues, oftentimes an archdeacon in fact exercises priestlike powers. He concludes by stubbornly claiming that, regardless of the prestige of the priesthood, no one can compel him to be elevated if he is unwilling.[67] Within a few years, however, Peter was apparently convinced of his suitability, and upon

62. Ibid., 364.

63. See above, chapter 1, note 14.

64. *Ep.* 123, 360.

65. "Quo progrederis sine filio, pater? quo sacerdos sine ministro properas?": Ibid. See Ambrose of Milan, *De officiis ministrorum*, 1.41.205.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid., 367.

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taking orders turned to the monks of the cathedral chapter at Chichester to pray for him as he entered the ranks of Aaron.[68] He seems to have made the transition to priest rather smoothly, for around the same time he took it upon himself to advise a new priest on the care of souls.[69] Once again the importance of Peter's vocation to his piety comes into stark relief: a request from a superior to change his status in the Church not only leads him to defend his rank of archdeacon, which became a primary concern of his in the 1200s, but moves him to considerations of sacramental theology. All of these aspects of his piety come together alongside his acute awareness of his advancing age.

This concern with the sacraments recurs throughout his writing in the 1190s. During the same period that anxiety over the power of the Eucharist influenced his decision to delay elevation to the priesthood, Peter devoted two treatises and parts of many letters to confession and penance. Given the displays of penitence that mark Peter's professional career, and the confessional tone through which he discusses his work for both Henry II and Baldwin, it is not terribly surprising to find Peter of Blois producing such tracts. Next to his earlier, self-deprecating confessions of worldliness and ambition, his treatises *De poenitentia* and *De confessione* seem a bit lacking in moral urgency. But the works are not without interest, for they show Peter delving into one of the most important currents of twelfth-century piety, one that would find papal sanction in the canons of Lateran IV.[70] *De confessione* falls into a tradition of confessional handbooks, and provides evidence of the growing consensus that "no one is saved without confession."[71] Peter emphasizes inner contrition as part of a threefold model of penance that includes "contrition of the heart, confession of the mouth, and affliction of the flesh," all of which lead ultimately to satisfaction.[72] The work, despite its dependence on received ideas, is still uniquely Peter's: he adorns the work not only with citations from the ancient *Lex Julia* but also with references to Arthur and Tristan.[73] The onetime student of poetry at Tours retained his humanist flair even when writing on sacramental theology.

68. *Ep.* 139, *PL* 207, 413–14. The salutation of this letter styles Peter the archdeacon of Bath, so his change of heart must have occured by 1199.

69. *Later Letters*, no. 79, pp. 332–35.

70. The classic study of this phase in the history of penance is still Paul Anciaux, *La théologie du sacrement de la pénitence au XIIe siècle* (Louvain, 1949).

71. *De poenitentia*, *PL* 207, 1080. For the church's formal prescription of confession for all the faithful, see the canons of Lateran IV, in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:245.

72. "cordis contritionem, oris confessionem, carnis afflictionem": *De confessione*, 1086.

73. On the *Lex Julia*, see *De confessione*, 1084; on Arthur and Tristan, see *De confessione*, 1088.

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The tract *De poenitentia* (whose full title in many manuscripts is *De penitentia ab sacerdote iniungenda*), which generally accompanies *De confessione* in the manuscripts, focuses on the role of the priest in assigning acts of penance to the sinful. Peter's own habit of representing himself as a penitent perhaps motivates his pleas that prelates show mildness for mildness when imposing penance. As may be expected, his concern is less with the intricacies of doctrine than with more general aspects of pastoral care, so central to Peter's practical theology. This epistolary tract rebukes an unnamed abbot apparently notorious for imposing harsh penance on his monks.

> Just as humble and sincere devotion is essential to the man confessing, so careful and circumspect discretion is necessary for the penitential, that is, the priest, that he discern between leper and leper [Deut. 17:8], that he himself possess these three things: goodness, wisdom, and discipline.[74]

An abbot, or any priest for that matter, must be approachable, and must dole out judgment fairly and mildly, or God will hold him accountable at the Last Judgment. The reference to leprosy, moreover, is loaded with significance for the priesthood, for it recalls the chapters in Deuteronomy relating to the duties of the priests and the discretion they must exercise in separating the clean from the unclean.[75] Peter, at once a priest and a penitent himself, approached this sacrament from both angles.

The two short works on confession and penance illustrate Peter's concern with the sacramental side of the priesthood, but he also continued to write about the other crucial priestly duty: preaching and defending the faith. Peter's ideal cleric not only venerates the sacraments but preaches the Gospel. It is not clear to what extent Peter himself actually preached, particularly since he entered sacerdotal orders so late in life. He left a collection of forty-six sermons, most of them organized around the liturgical year, which he calls a *liber exhortationum*.[76] Such sermon collections were common among both monks and secular clerics, and Peter could have modeled his on those of any number of writers, including his literary hero Hildebert of Lavardin or the monk Aelred of Rievaulx.[77] His col-

74. *De poenitentia a sacerdote injugenda*, *PL* 207, 1093.

75. Deut. 13–14.

76. There are only two extant manuscripts of the sermon collection: British Library MS Royal 8F xvii (s. xiii) and British Library Arundel 322 (s. xiii). Each contains forty-six sermons, which are titled *exhortationes*. The former MS includes the letters and a number of Peter's treatises, while the latter includes no other works of Peter's. The sermons appear in slightly differing orders in the respective MSS. Köhn ("Pierre de Blois," 1514) has concluded that all sermons not contained in these MSS (nos. 24, 28, 34–36, 40–41, 43–50, 63–64) are spurious.

77. For the phrase *liber exhorationum* or the term *exhorationes* applied to the sermons, see

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lection is similar in organization and size to the latter's, and he seems to borrow passages from the former in at least one of the sermons.[78] Study of these sermons, however, is severely hampered by the lack of information about the practice of twelfth-century preaching.[79] In a later letter, Peter explains to a correspondent that he has ceased preaching altogether, because he no longer has the energy and because, as a Frenchman, he could not effectively preach among the English.[80] His extant sermons, of course, are in Latin, but Peter on one occasion offers compelling evidence that vernacular sermons were in fact translated for a learned audience. The *Sermo ad populum*, number sixty-five in the *Patrologia Latina* edition, begins by claiming that "You have asked me, my brother, to write down and so share with you a sermon delivered to the people and to translate into Latin the things I presented to laymen so crudely and wretchedly."[81] Given the existence of a strong literary tradition of Latin sermons for feast days and celebrations of saints, however, it seems more than likely that Peter preached in Latin, and that his sermons were either composed for and delivered to clerics of his cathedral or simply written down without ever being delivered. As written documents, they are of course Latin through and through, even if they had, in some primitive form, been delivered in French or even English.

The *exhortationes* he left behind reflect his concern with penitence and fear of judgment, but rarely refer to external events.[82] In the very first sermon, Peter sets a decidedly confessional tone by presenting himself as an aging cleric trying to disavow his earlier life:

Now I keep silent from God, the world, and myself. From God, because I have His praise neither in my mouth nor my heart; from the world, because I do not condemn its evil with word or deed; from myself, because I neither rebuke my

Invectiva, 1113, as well as British Library MS Royal 8F xvii, f. 108r, and British Library MS Arundel 322, f. 4v.

78. See above, chapter 2, notes 87–88.

79. On preaching, see Jean Longère, *La prédication médiévale* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1983). Useful discussions of the practice of preaching among scholars during Peter of Blois's time can also be found in Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants*, 36–39 and 107–16. For a basic overview and bibliography, see Beverly Mayne Kienzle and David D'Avray, "Sermons," in *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, ed. F. A. C. Mantello and A. G. Rigg (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of American Press, 1996), 659–69. For a more focused study on twelfth-century preaching, see Nicole Beriou, *L'avénement des maîtres de la Parole: La prédication à Paris au XIIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1998).

80. *Later Letters*, no. 42, pp. 194–96.

81. *Sermo* 65 (*Ad populum*), *PL* 207, 750.

82. There is still no extended treatment of Peter's sermons. An adequate summary (save for its ignorance of the spurious nature of some twenty-two of the sermons in the *PL*) is found in J. de Ghellinck, *L'essor de la littérature latine au XIIe siècle*, 227–28.

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sins by confession, nor redeem them by satisfaction, nor compensate for them by means of good works.[83]

The powerful penitential impulse evident elsewhere in Peter's career continues to figure prominently throughout his sermons and other spiritual writings. As a protest of a writer's own unworthiness it may have seem conventional, but it is also powerfully personal, and perfectly consistent with all that is known of Peter's own life. Peter, as has been discussed in previous chapters, did not have a single, all-consuming moment of penitence, but instead incorporated penitence into his literary and spiritual being throughout the 1190s. His assumption of priestly orders further encouraged this trend in his thought (as exemplified by the tracts *De confessione* and *De poenitentia*), and his sermons provided an ideal vehicle through which he could develop this trend.

Stylistically, the sermons display both Peter's skill at weaving together biblical passages and his penchant for adorning his spiritual ideas with classical allusions. In addition, he practices the relatively novel method of employing *distinctiones*, literary devices that set out the various allegorical meanings of particular words in Scripture, and thus participates in the new (and passing) trends in sermon writing. *Distinctiones* can be found in the work of most of the prominent theologians and preachers at the end of the twelfth century, and as early as 1160 Peter Lombard had employed a *distinctio* of the word *nubis* that Peter of Blois would also have occasion to use.[84] A straightforward example of the method occurs in the third sermon. "There are three advents of the Lord: the first in the flesh, the second for the soul, and the third for judgment."[85] Peter then goes on to describe each of these three advents in detail. Such *distinctiones* make for repetitive reading, but nevertheless allow for clear and simple textual explication for the audience. Despite the derivative nature of much of the material, Peter's sermons not only illustrate his concern with preaching the word but his literary versatility.

83. "Nunc autem sileo a Deo, a saeculo, a meipso. A Deo, cujus laudem in corde et ore non habeo; a saeculo, cujus malitiam nec verbo nec opere damno; a meipso, quia peccata mea confessione non arguo, nec satisfactione redimo, nec bonis operibus recompenso": *Sermo* 1 *(De adventu domini)*, *PL* 207, 562.

84. On the *distinctio* in general, as well as its use by both Peter Lombard and Peter of Blois, see Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, "*Statim invenire:* Schools, Preachers and New Attitudes to the Page," in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, 212–16. The use of this method for the word *nubis* by Peter Lombard is found under the name of Hildebert of Lavardin in *PL* 171, 373–74. Peter of Blois's version is found in *Sermo* 2, *PL* 207, 565.

85. "Tres sunt adventus Domini: primus in carne, secundus ad animam, tertius ad judicium": *Sermo* 3, *PL* 207, 569.

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For a twelfth-century cleric, however, defense of the faith required not only occasional sermons for feast days, but also vigorous polemic against Jews and heretics. Peter turned to his deeply felt conviction that the secular cleric had strict obligations in the world to face the threat of unorthodox opinions and dissenting groups. To outline how the clergy ought to respond to such threats, Peter produced two works in the late 1190s, a tract *Contra perfidiam Judaeorum* and a collection of received wisdom entitled *De testimoniis fidei*. Peter's *Contra perfidiam* draws together a slough of authorities that one might use in defending Christianity against Jews. The best strategy for doing so, he argues, is to bury the opponent with appeals to Sripture and esteemed patristic sources and not get bogged down in meticulous disputation, "since as a result of illicit and careless debates a virulent crop of heresies runs wild."[86] Many twelfth-century *adversus Judaeos* collections survive, such as Peter the Venerable's *Adversus Iudaeorum inveteratam durietiem*, but Peter's is unique in that it goes beyond the usual authorities such as Jerome, and refers to an array of writers that includes a Jew, Josephus, "noteworthy writer of the Jewish captivity and of antiquity" to support arguments about the nature of Christ.[87] Several of the book's thirty-six chapters consist simply of lists of quotations; Peter does not attempt to advance an original line of argument, but, once again, to compile the truth into a useful bundle, and this, as we have seen, is his method in many of his works. Peter would have seen nothing stale or anti-intellectual in repeating old arguments, for they were the indisputable foundations of the Christian life. Moreover, such a collection would be quite useful to a secular cleric charged with defending the faith, and Peter's role may have been to bring the systematizing impulse of the schools to the day-to-day activities of the clergy. In the late twelfth century, however, this approach had already become somewhat archaic, since works like Abelard's *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian* had shown how the problem of the Jews could be attacked with greater subtlety and sensitivity. As he provides armament for a more traditional sort of attack, Peter pays homage to his patristic heroes like Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Isidore.

To accompany his *Contra perfidiam Judaeorum*, Peter composed an additional tract on the foundations of the Christian faith, similar in for-

86. *Contra perdifiam Judaeorum*, *PL* 207, 825.

87. "Josephus quoque Judaicae captivitatis et antiquitatis scriptor egregius": Ibid., 851. On the idiosyncratic nature of Peter's use of Josephus, see Gilbert Dahan, *The Christian Polemic against the Jews in the Middle Ages*, trans. Joy Gladding (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 47–48. Peter the Venerable's work is found in *Petri Venerabilis Adversus iudeorum inverteratam duritiem*, ed. Yvonne Friedman, *CCCM* 58 (Turnholt: Bepols, 1985).

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mat and style, which provided *testimonia* against heretics as well as Jews, in addition to a thirty-five chapter opening section on the foundations of the Christian faith. The seldom-studied *De testimoniis fidei* has never been published, and exists in only three manuscripts, where it appears along with the *Contra perfidiam Judaeorum*.[88] Peter once again is a conscientious *compilator*, as he freely admits in the letter with which he dedicates the work to an unknown correspondent, apparently a prelate:

> In this work I follow, indeed I honor, the footsteps of the venerable fathers who wrote about the faith and carried their standards against heresies. Among these men of renown were Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius, Rufinus, Irenaeus, Hilary, Jerome, Augustine, Epiphanius, and Baldwin, the primate of England, who although born in a later time, does not stand far below them in terms of his life, wisdom, and holiness. In the books of these and many others, as if in a garden of spices, I have collected the little flowers of sentences, and from them I have made a bit of honey for those who are yet young in their faith.[89]

Several years after Baldwin's death, Peter includes him among the great Fathers, just as he included Hildebert of Lavardin among the great Latin writers.[90] All the men Peter refers to above are in fact cited and acknowledged in the tract, and most of the time Peter merely weaves together relevant passages, often without any commentary.[91] Parallel to the list of Fathers, Peter adds a list of ancient heresies followed by their modern descendants "which awake those slumbering under the ashes."[92] The heresies mentioned by name include the Patarenes and Humiliati, although he does not go into detail about their beliefs in either the introduction or the tract itself.[93] Peter also briefly discusses the Cathars, referring to

88. On the manuscripts, see Revell's note in *Later Letters*, 323. The MSS in question are, in addition to the Jesus College MS cited below, San Daniele del Friuli MS 264, ff. 1–64, and Erfurt Amplonianus F. 71, ff. 175–86 (in which the tract is incomplete).

89. "In hoc autem opere sequor, immo adoro, vestigia venerabilium patrum qui tractaverunt de fide, et contra hereses victrices aquilas erexerunt. Inter quos celebrioris famae titulis effulsere Eusebius Cesariensis, Athanasius, Ruffinus, Ireneus, Hilarius, Ieronimus, Agustinus, Epiphanius, et primas Anglie Baldwinus, qui licet sit posterior tempore non multum tamen ab eis degenerat vita, scientia, sanctitate. In istorum et aliorum quamplurimum libris, quasi in ortis aromatum, sententiarum flosculos collegi de quibus mellificavi modicum quid his qui adhuc in fide sunt parvuli": *Later Letters*, no. 77, p. 325.

90. See above, chapter 2, note 85, and chapter 3, notes 69–70.

91. A similar method is employed by Gerald of Wales in *De principis instructione*, ed. J. S. Brewer, RS 21.8 (London, 1891); see also Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 69–100.

92. *Later Letters*, no. 77, p. 326.

93. Peter's discussion of these heretics is placed in the context of English reactions to the Cathars in Nicholas Vincent, "England and the Albigensian Crusade," in *England and Europe in the Reign of Henry III (1216–1272)*, ed. Björn K. U. Weiler and Ifor W. Rowlands (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2002), 67–70.

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them only as "those who suppose that the devil is the author of the world and all that which is below the moon," and locating them in "Italy, Gothia, Provence and a great part of Spain."[94] Again, Peter goes into few details, and instead heads straight for patristic examples to fight the new ideas. This is the sort of approach that can frustrate an historian, for Peter refers in passing to one of the most significant developments of the late twelfth century, the rise of popular heresy, but does not provide detailed historical information about it. While the piece offers an impressive amount of patristic allusion and citation, it betrays no understanding of contemporary heresy. The text speaks primarily of the heretics known to Saint Jerome and the other Fathers, and in his treatment of the Manicheans he does not complain of their dualism (as he does in the prologue) but rebukes them for denying the role of unmerited grace in salvation.[95] It is the sheer fact of the heretics' ecclesiological challenges to which Peter responds. The Church councils cited in the book are similarly ancient and Peter refers to all of the important ones: Nicea, Chalcedon, Sardis, Constantinople, and several of the Toledo synods.[96] The result is an encyclopedic compilation of Church authorities focusing on the Fathers; no attempt is made to adapt the material to contemporary threats. Peter, of course, would not have seen any such need; the Fathers provided him with all that he needed for any situation, be it theological or literary.[97]

Peter's debt to Baldwin of Ford is especially marked.[98] Among the early chapters are discussions that must have been close to Peter's heart, particularly the chapter "on fear and tribulation in the world," and most of these discussions depend heavily, if not entirely on Baldwin's *De commendatione fidei*.[99] Peter acknowledges Baldwin, so he could not have

94. Ibid.

95. Oxford MS Jesus College 38, ff. 99v–100r.

96. Ibid., ff. 94r–96v.

97. An exception to Peter's focus on ancient heresies is an attack on the theory of "habitus" that was associated with Peter Lombard, found in the final chapter of the work (ff. 102v–104v). Peter identifies this theory in this chapter, titled "De heresi eorum qui dicunt hominem assumptum non esse aliquid." Peter's critique seems to be similar to that of Gerhoh of Reichersberg in the 1160s, for both are concerned with defending the "assumptus homo" theory that Christ's humanity was more or less divinized. On Gerhoh and Peter Lombard, see Marcia L. Colish, *Peter Lombard* (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1994), 1:427–28. Innocent III also attacked the theory of "habitus," for which see Helene Tillman, *Pope Innocent III*, trans. Walter Sax (Amsterdam, New York, and Oxford: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1980), 3–4.

98. On Baldwin as a theologian, see David N. Bell, "Baldwin of Ford and Twelfth-Century Theology," in *Noble Piety and Reformed Monasticism*, ed. E. Rozanne Elder, *Studies in Medieval Cistercian History* 7 (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cisterican Publications, 1981), 136–48.

99. *PL* 204, 571–640. It is a passage in this work found at col. 581 upon which depends Peter's treatment of the same subject in Jesus College 38. f. 90r.

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conceived of the work as an attempt to represent Baldwin's ideas as his own. Rather, Peter engages in an act of loyalty to his former lord who died on crusade. Following Baldwin, Peter strings together, often with great effect, some of the most recognizable biblical treatments of the foundations of Christianity. Here the reader finds definitions of faith, advice on interpreting Scripture, and discussions of the harmony of the Old and New Testaments. Occasionally Peter (sometimes following Baldwin word for word) can compile allusions so as to create a profound emotional effect, as when he writes about the need to maintain faith in adversity and tribulation. Having discussed these *fundamenta* of the faith in the first thirty-five chapters, Peter moves on to the attack against heresy to construct a comprehensive guide on how to adhere to and defend his religion.[100]

While the book is systematic and aims to collect and disseminate the received wisdom that defines Christianity and defends it against enemies, it is not the work of a lawyer or a Scholastic. It is a secular cleric's book, treating the Fathers as much as literary sources as doctrinal authorities. The systematic impulse that scholars have identified with early Scholasticism in the twelfth century here serves the interest not of law or philosophy but the piety of archdeacons and bishops. Peter not only admires individual Fathers but the very workings of papal authority, and he praises the collectors of papal canons as the clearest guide to *assertio fidei*.[101] Through his references and allusions, then, Peter makes his spiritual point, and constructs his piety from received authority. It is the books of the ancient Fathers that allows this *litteratus* to convey deeply felt spiritual ideals.

That Peter so devoted himself to the compilations of patristic authority and to sacramental theology in the 1190s results in part from the end of his career as a royal and archiepiscopal servant. Starting with this decade Peter ceased to be a *curialis*, and as he embraced the sacerdotal order he immediately confronted preaching and the sacraments in his letters and treatises. As a consequence of these changes, his ideal of pastoral care shifts its focus from courtly service or episcopal duty to the life of the preacher and minister of the Eucharist. This change, however, took place only after a long career that weighed heavily on his conscience, and that continued to impart tension and anxiety to his life and work. Despite the

100. Oxford MS Jesus College 38, ff. 92v–102r.

101. Ibid., ff. 102v. On the systematic tendencies of twelfth-century thought, see Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, 1:17–35. Cf. Colish, "Systematic Theology and Theological Renewal."

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change in focus, however, Peter was still mapping out the proper place for the cleric in society: he is a minister of the sacrament, a confessor, a preacher, and a source of wisdom to be used against the heretics. Even after his withdrawal from ecclesiastical politics, he approached membership in the clerical *ordo* with intense emotion. His veneration of the Eucharist, which in a spiritual sense strongly anticipates Francis of Asissi, was intricately bound up with his conception of what the cleric (and specifically, the priest), ought to be.

Love, the Mass, and Old Age

As the thirteenth century began, Peter's literary and ecclesiastical careers entered their final stages. Between 1200 and 1205, at which time he complained to Pope Innocent III of his old age and of entering the *vespera vitae* while beset by the tribulations of the archdeacon's office, he turned seventy years old.[102] Between 1198 and 1202 he gave up (or was forced from) the archdeaconry of Bath and assumed that of London, while continuing the trend in his writings toward theological discussions and examinations of interior piety and the sacraments.[103] By 1202–1205 he produced the final version of his main letter collection, but continued to write prolifically, as evidenced by the group of letters now known as either the "later" or "Erfurt" letters (after the monastery that possessed a fine manuscript of many of these pieces). Despite occasional references to prebends, his enemies in the London cathedral chapter, and the pressures of the papal interdict of 1209, as a group Peter's later writings are less concerned with the business of a professional cleric than with the spiritual and theological reflections of an aging man. To this period belongs, in addition to the letters, the lengthy tract *De amicitia Christiana et de dilectione Dei et proximi*, which gathers together monastic (essentially Cistercian) ideas on the subject of spiritual friendship. In the final years of his life, Peter more than ever before took stock of the new streams of piety surrounding him, and channeled them into his writings in a manner seldom observed among secular clerics.

The title *De amicitia christiana*, of course, recalls both Cicero's *De amicitia* and earlier twelfth-century monastic writings on friendship, especially those of Aelred of Rievaulx. Peter indeed recognized the value of these most important products of the monastic thought of his day, and

102. For the phrase *vespera vitae* and Peter's complaint, see *Ep.* 151, *PL* 207, 442–43.

103. On the possibility that Peter kept both archdeaconries simultaneously, see above, chapter 1, note 133.

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had long invoked the ideal of friendship in his letters to monks and clerics alike. The connection between letter writing and *amicitia* was not lost on Jean Leclercq, who, although he had no great admiration for Peter's spiritual thought, remarked, "Est-ce que par l'effet d'une pure coincidence que Pierre de Blois, théoricien du genre épistolaire, est aussi le théoricien de l'amitié?"[104] Peter's epistolary friendships, however, do not seem to have been terribly successful, and one could argue that the *amicitia* of Peter's letters is hardly the disinterested friendship praised by Cicero.[105] In the *De amicitia Christiana* he set out to provide what is essentially a *compendium* (although he does not call it one) on the ideal of Christian friendship as a bond between men, with Christ as its foundation, and adorned with copious patristic and classical allusions. Again Peter employed the method of *compilatio,* and adapted the overwhelming majority of the content from two tracts of Aelred of Rievaulx: *De spiritali amicitia* and *Speculum charitatis*. Scholars have not been kind to Peter for borrowing Aelred's words and ideas, although Peter clearly anticipated criticism in his prologue to the piece.

> From diverse writers, as if they were flowers, I have taken bits so that I might make them honey for my work, and I have gathered together the ideas of writers both ancient and modern on friendship and the love of God and neighbor into a single collection . . . . Indeed, I know that if this little book should make its way to the public, a rival will complain, and, grumbling with poisonous words, ascribe it to compilation [*compilationi ascribet*] that I strive to bring into evidence the sentences of the ancients, now clouded by age or obscured by the confusion of a dubious understanding. But in this way things that would become obsolete through disuse and neglect, by feverish study are channeled into the cause of virtue and lead to the reward of abundant grace.[106]

It is not a twelfth- or thirteenth-century *aemulus* so much as earlier twentieth-century scholars, most notably E. Vansteenburghe and Philippe Delhaye, who have objected to Peter's book, and his apology has not succeeded in refuting any charges of plagiarism. These scholars argued that Peter's apology itself makes his work suspect and that, while Peter frequently cites Cicero and Seneca to strengthen his writings with classical authority, he makes no mention of Aelred so as to hide his dependence on contemporary authors. Delhaye suggested that Peter's habit of modifying

104. Jean Leclercq, "L'amitié dans les lettres au moyen age," *Revue du moyen âge latine* 1 (1945): 400. See also Haseldine, "Friendship and Rivalry"; and Hirata, "John of Salisbury, Gerard Pucelle and *amicitia*."

105. On friendship in Peter's letters, see above, chapter 2.

106. *De amicitia Christiana et de dilectione Dei et proximi,* 99–100.

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Aelred's phrasing on numerous occasions proves with certainty that he intended the tract as a grand deception.[107] Peter, however, did acknowledge his contemporary Baldwin in the prologue to his *De testimoniis fidei* before making liberal use of the latter's *De commendatione fidei*.[108] Such scholarly judgments, of course, hinge on the rather anachronistic application of modern conceptions of authorship and intellectual property to the twelfth century, and stem largely from anxiety that Peter may somehow take credit for Aelred's achievement. Given contemporary attitudes toward the borrowing of sources, it is not at all unreasonable to suppose that Peter saw his appropriation as an act of piety. In addition, Aelred himself borrowed not only from Cicero but from other monastic authors, and his ideas appeared in other collections of correspondence, notably that of the Pseudo-Alan of Lille.[109] Peter dealt in common spiritual and intellectual currency when he turned his pen to the topic of Christian love.

Twelfth-century writers, however, did recognize a distinction between plagiarism and compiling, and Peter walked a thin line. But his *De amicitia* demonstrates, albeit on an unusually grand scale, the twelfth-century method of instruction through familiar formulas, and Peter accomplished his goal of producing a *compendium*. While Aelred's work is a dialogue, a conversation amongst monastic friends, Peter's is a schematic, well-organized summary of ideas concerning love and friendship. It begins with a definition of love as "a certain attraction for the things which desire leads us to choose," and moves on to discuss related definitions and questions on the subject.[110]

The book holds considerable biographical interest, for it shows Peter looking for a more pure form of human relationship than that found among those "who are carried off and consumed by love of the world."[111] The anxieties of the clerical world thus give way to Cicero and Aelred's

107. E. Vansteenberghe, "Deux théoreticiens de l'amitié," 587; Phillipe Delhaye, "Deux adaptations du 'De amicitia' de Cicéron au XIIe siècle," 309–10. The notes to Delhaye's article provide a thorough summary of parallels between Peter and Aelred.

108. See above, note 89.

109. See Hudry, *Alain de Lille (?): Lettres Familières*, 88, 92, 98, 100, where similarities with Peter's work are used to support the improbable thesis that some of the letters represent correspondence between Alan and Peter. See above, chapter 2, note 20.

110. "Amor enim est quaedam vis appetiva rerum, quas ex desiderio eligimus et amplectimur ad fruendum": *De amicitia Christiana et de dilectione Dei et proximi*, in *Un traité de l'amour du XIIe siècle*, 108. Cf. Aelred of Rievaulx, *De spiritale amicitia*, ed. A. Hoste and C. H. Talbot, *CCCM* 1 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1971), 292: "Est autem amor quidam animae rationalis affectus per quem et fruitur eo cum quadam interiori suavitate, amplectitur et conservat adeptum." Translated by Mark F. Williams as *Aelred of Rievalux's Spiritual Friendship* (Scranton, Pa.: University of Scranton Press, 1994), 32.

111. "qui saeculari amore abstracti et absorpti sunt": *De amicitia*, 106.

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disinterested friendship. While Aelred's highly personal prologue to *De spiritali amicitia* claims that it was written to assuage guilt over past misdirected love, Peter's reasoning is psychologically more simplistic. Indeed, as Delhaye argued in an unusually generous moment, Peter's tract is that of a scholar, adorned with classical allusions and strings of definitions, not that of a monk.[112] Aelred's dialogue recounts the conversation of a group of close friends in a monastery, but Peter's is the advice of an aged archdeacon of London.

Peter could not match Aelred's elegant spontaneity of style, and his rather vague statement of his inspiration, that "love can scarcely be found anywhere that is not for profit," is considerably less engaging than Aelred's self-loathing protestations of past sin.[113] While the abbot's book follows the flow of conversation, Peter's is a handbook for clerics (he presented it to two bishops), treating aspects of love one by one, with a noticeable focus on the sundering of failed friendships. But his work on love does contain some of Peter's most highly wrought prose—urgent, introspective, and, indeed, often taken verbatim from earlier writers. He clearly reflects experience reading monastic Song of Songs commentary when he writes:

> It is Him, oh my soul, your beloved, arriving invisible, mercifully and gently so as to excite you, to ensconce Himself in the lap of your love, to creep into you, to kindle your desire, illuminate your inner eyes, inflame your passion just as He offers his first fruits not as the whole of his sweet delight, and not to satiate you but just to give you a taste.[114]

Such writing, derivative or not, is not typical of a secular cleric. In the works of clerical contemporaries such as John of Salisbury, Gerald of Wales, and Walter Map, we do not find this kind of passionate expression in the anticipation of the divine. Peter's dependence on Aelred and others, discomfiting as it is to modern readers, endows his piety with a unique flavor, so that this book of a humanist becomes something more than a schematic tract on friendship; it is a representation of a unique, Cistercian-influenced piety brought into the clerical context by a pious

112. Delhaye, "Deux adaptations," 311.

113. "vix invenitur delectio. quae non sit quaestuaria et venalis": *De amicitia*, 106. Cf. Aelred, *De spiritali amicitia*, 287–88, trans. Williams, 27–28.

114. "iste est, o anima! dilectus tuus invisibiliter, misericorditer et dignanter asscendans, ut excitet te, ut se tibi inspiret in sinu tui amoris, tibi se insinuet, ut tuum accendat desiderium, ut illuminet interiores oculos, ut inflammet affectum, sicut primitias non plenitudinem suae dulcedinis, non ad satietatem, sed ad degustationem tibi exhibet": *De dilectione Dei et proximi*, in *Un traité de l'amour*, 564.

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archdeacon in his twilight years. On a spiritual and literary level Peter united monastic and clerical strands just as the Church strove to unify knowledge and spirituality into a universally acceptable synthesis.[115] The concern with Christian friendship that gave rise to Peter's *De amicitia* is also present throughout Peter's later letters, often expressed with great literary effect, as when he represents his good friends as being far away from him, or when he speaks of love as a force that spiritually joins those physically far apart.[116]

The *De amicitia* appears to be Peter's last long tract.[117] Two letters that present the book to two different bishops (Jocelin of Wells, bishop of Bath, and William of St. Mere-Eglise, bishop of London) allow for a date of around 1205 or later, and both refer to Peter as the archdeacon of London.[118] During this period Peter stopped making additions to his main letter collection, and apparently did not compile his new letters for circulation as a group. His chief literary monument from the period between 1200 and his death in 1211, then, is the collection of letters now known as the "later" or "Erfurt" letters. In general these later pieces have little to do with the goings-on of royal or archiepiscopal courts. Some letters concern the hierarchy of the London cathedral chapter where Peter held his archdeaconry, but these pieces are the exception to the more personal, spiritual missives that dominate the corpus. As he approached death, the fear of which had long been one of his favorite subjects, Peter took solace above all in expounding, not too originally, upon fundamental questions of theology, and on the fate of his and others' souls. He discusses the Mass, questions of free will and redemption, and numerous other *quaestiones*, often showing the influence of Peter Lombard and other masters from the middle of the previous century.[119]

Many of these later letters leave only a vague hint of their addressees, but a few direct themselves to great and powerful ecclesiastics. Conspicuously absent from the recipient list, however, is any king. Of special significance are the half-dozen letters to Innocent III, in particular three on

115. On this synthesis, see M.-D. Chenu, "Monks, Canons and Laymen in Search of the Apostolic Life," in *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century*, trans. Jerome Taylor and Lester K. Little (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 202–38.

116. E.g., see *Later Letters*, no. 21, pp. 111–12.

117. Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 124, notes that *De testimoniis fidei*, and not *De amicitia*, is Peter's last work. The former piece, however, must have been written by 1197, since it is referred to in the *Invectiva*, and the use of the title archdeacon of London in letters presenting the *De amicitia* seem to date the latter work to around the turn of the century.

118. *Later Letters*, nos. 19 and 78, pp. 104–8 and 329–32.

119. See above, chapter 3, passim.

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the matter of the place of the Eucharist in the Mass, in which Peter complains of current liturgical language and the irrelevance of contemporary discussions of transubstantiation. These pieces, sometimes indignant complaints from the archdeacon of London to the most important pope of the High Middle Ages, illustrate Peter's characteristic presumption, bordering on impudence. He objects to the phrase "mystery of the faith" in the Mass, either unaware of or unmoved by Innocent's own defense of the same terminology in his work *De sacrificio missae*.[120] Uncharacteristically, Peter here strikes out very much on his own, for neither his epistolary model Hildebert, nor his ecclesiastical hero Baldwin had been troubled by the phrase that he finds so objectionable. His own anxiety about the priesthood may account for this, for he worries above all about the role of the priest in the sacraments, much as he did in his deliberations over entering the priesthood. "Great indeed," he writes, "is the terror and wonder that strikes those who serve at the altar when, among the words of life [Job 5:4], among the sacraments of eternal salvation, the words of another are ascribed to Christ, which render the truth suspect."[121] The priest must speak the truth, so how can he, in the course of the Mass, utter words not found in any of the Gospels?[122] Writing as a sometime lawyer to the greatest of the lawyer-popes, Peter appeals to legal language and even quotes Justinian's prohibitions against speaking falsely.[123]

The second of the letters to Innocent is similarly revealing of Peter's clerical piety. Again concerned with the role of the priest in administering communion to the people, Peter complains that the existing language of the Mass does not have a sufficiently powerful impact on the congregation. Some of Peter's complaints are quibbles over terminology but others approach the core of his ideal of the sacrament:

> Indeed, it is only fitting that in so beneficial a sacrifice, there should be placed fiery words, just like glowing sparks, that inspire devoted feeling, so that the whole of the inner man, reminded of the misery and torture of Christ, will dissolve into tears.[124]

Only recently elevated to priest's orders, Peter confronts the great reforming pope on one of the weightiest issues of personal religiosity and the sacraments. The impulse toward Lateran IV and its canons on con-

120. *PL* 217, 763–916.
121. *Later Letters,* no. 1, p. 4.
122. Ibid., 4–5.
123. Ibid., 5.
124. "Decebat equidem ut in sacrificio tam salubri, sicut scintille ardentes, verba ponerentur ignita et affectionis devotissime affectiva, ita quod totus homo interior ex recordatione miserarium et cruciatum Christi liquesceret in lacrimas": *Later Letters,* no. 2, p. 14.

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fession and communion, and also toward the ecclesiology of Francis of Asissi, though embodied by Innocent himself, clearly came from many quarters.

This was at the same time that Peter saw fit to include Cistercian ideals of Christian charity into his spiritual tracts. Toward the end of his life Peter more than ever before had his finger on the pulse of contemporary religious sentiment, and continued to use letters to reach out to an exalted, though strictly ecclesiastical, audience. The clerical dilemma remained, for Peter still advised clerks to flee secular service and repent of worldliness. He treated the papal interdict of 1208 less as a catastrophe than as an earthly trial to be welcomed, a portent of eternal delights to come.[125] Yet anxiety for his soul, and a concern with penitence, never disappeared from his collection. Writing to a group of monks about his fear of death, Peter concluded:

> The dregs of my conscience accuse me. The angels, apostles, and other saints, whose salutary warnings and examples I have despised, accuse me, bear witness against me, judge me, and condemn me. I know also that demons in their great steadfastness and pride will stand against me, witnesses to my iniquities, whose flames they first fanned. It is hard for the upright to be saved [1 Peter 4:18], and I, where will I go? I will not dare to show myself, and I will not be able to hide. The way of the unrighteous will be shadowed and twisting, and they will be pursued by the angel of the Lord [Ps. 34:6].[126]

Underlying Peter of Blois's emotional presentation of the concepts of Christian love and the efficacy of the sacraments is his own conscience, which not even a relatively quiet and pious old age could fully assuage. In fact, the approach of death, to which he refers several times in the letter cited above, seems to have imparted a greater urgency to his already powerful penitential impulse. In his final writings, then, Peter faced the dénouement of the dilemmas that had troubled him for many years.

The Secular Cleric and the Monasteries

Despite the anxiety that dogged him in the world of the secular clergy, Peter never sought to escape by entering the cloister. He treated life in the world as a profoundly important calling. Nevertheless, the monastic orders occupied a crucial place in his thought world, for they provided him with institutionalized ideals of piety, and a highly developed set of terms,

125. *Later Letters*, no. 75, pp. 319–20.
126. *Later Letters*, no. 33, p. 171.

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concepts, and exempla for discussing contemporary religious experience. Throughout his career he corresponded with large numbers of monks, urged women to enter convents, cautioned monks to abide by their vows, and on several occasions saw fit to praise particular orders or houses. Many monks and canons had educational and social backgrounds similar to Peter's, so he gazed into what to him must have seemed a rather open cloister. The monastic world would not have been an altogether alien milieu. His brother William was a Benedictine and for a time an abbot in Sicily, and Peter saw nothing inappropriate in chiding him for excessive worldliness (in fact Peter appears to have shamed William into giving up his office).[127] The conventional division of ecclesiastical culture into regular and secular conditioned Peter's self-perception as a cleric and a Christian.[128] Popular spiritual ideas raced through various institutional contexts at a furious pace throughout the century, and Peter provides evidence of this. As an ecclesiastical administrator and adviser he came into professional contact with the new orders, while he simultaneously read their works and perhaps pondered their message.

Although contemporaries recognized and lamented the failure of many of the cloistered to live up to the monastic ideal, and although fierce debate raged over the most accurate interpretation of Benedict's *Rule*, there was little question as to the monks' place in society. They lived in cloisters, prayed, and occasionally, as in the case of Bernard of Clairvaux, emerged from their communities to function as the Church's moral center. Among monks it was primarily those who became prelates that experienced the sorts of anxieties and ambiguities inherent to secular clerics, as Bernard's *De consideratione* powerfully demonstrates. Not surprisingly, then, Peter of Blois tended to discuss monks in terms of separation from the world, with an emphasis on the distinctive features of their condition.[129] At the same time, however, monastic ideas of the good life and the value of contemplation influenced his views on service in the world and occasionally, as I have suggested in chapter 5, his program for episcopal duty. Peter's writings suggest a somewhat uneasy appropriation of monastic ideals in a secular context, a vague ideological compromise that characterized religious thought before Francis and his followers provided a new model for the thirteenth century.[130] The thought and action

127. On William, see above, chapter 1.

128. On Peter as a channel for the diffusion of monastic and regular canonical ideas, see Markowski, "Writer and Reformer," passim.

129. On this point, see Higonnet, "Spiritual Ideas," 222–26.

130. See Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, 55–74; and Little, *Religious Poverty*, esp. 146–217.

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of those who assumed the obligation of devoting most of their waking energies to prayer and contemplation were thus indispensable to Peter's conception of his place in the world.

The foregoing chapters have already noted several instances when Peter treated the regular life as a vocation distinct from his own but possessing desirable qualities. When he entreated a monk not to strive for the mobility that came with the office of prior, for example, he praised the cloister as a haven for reading and study and therefore, along with the schools, the closest place to Paradise on this earth.[131] A letter to Arnulf of Lisieux warned that a monastery ought not to be used as an escape from the pressures of episcopal duty, not because of any defect in the monastic life, but because Arnulf had chosen to bind himself to his flock. The closest Peter came to outright denunciation of monks qua monks was an indignant protest against Christ Church's election of Reginald of Salisbury to the see of Canterbury, in which he argued that, compared to bishops and clerics, monks had insufficient learning to make such decisions.[132] While the monastic orders had different expectations and different functions from secular ecclesiastics, Peter recognized the areas in which monks shared his goals (such as quiet study, for instance), and did not shrink from reminding them of their proper duties.

Two general, and crucial, aspects of Peter's treatment of the monastic life emerge from even the most cursory survey of his letter collections. First, unlike such well-known contemporaries as Gerald of Wales, Walter Map, and John of Salisbury, Peter never engaged in a general satire of the religious orders.[133] At no point did he repeat the common caricature of Cistercians as avaricious, nor did he lampoon monks as inherently hypocritical. Models for such criticisms abounded in twelfth-century literature, but Peter left them alone. The second important characteristic of his treatment of monks lies in the marked increase of letters written to monks and abbots as he grew older.[134] In his old age, as he turned his attention away from bishops and kings and toward the coming judgment, Peter wrote (or purported to write) to an audience of men withdrawn from the world. His literary output thus betrays a drift toward distinctly spiritual concerns, reflecting a changing orientation of the issues treated

131. See above, chapter 3, note 27.

132. On Arnulf and Reginald see above, chapter 5.

133. For example, Gerald of Wales, *Speculum Ecclesiae*, ed. J. S. Brewer, RS 21.4 (London, 1873), esp. 29–117; Walter Map, *De nugis*, 100–101; John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, denounces hypocritical Cistercians and Cluniacs, but concedes that many who take the habit are truly holy.

134. See above, chapter 2.

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in his letters. Although he stopped short of entering an abbey, he clearly gravitated toward monastic culture, both by writing to its members and by alluding to its ideas.

Peter never devoted a treatise or letter specifically to the orders of society, or to the obligations of a particular order, but the idea of a diverse clerical world informs his entire corpus, and while the ideal of diversity within a unified Church dates to the earliest Christian centuries, it was only following the explosion of new orders in the eleventh and twelfth centuries that the reality of numerous orders claiming to pursue the proper monastic life put that ideal to the test on a large scale. Treatises discussing the various ecclesiastical groups, such as the *Libellus de diversis ordinibus*, and the epistolary tracts by Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter the Venerable on proper monastic observance, began to discuss these new developments.[135] Peter of Blois, for his part, assumed a multiplicity of orders within the Church and discussed correct behavior for monks in terms of adherence to customs and faithfulness to vows. His own self-perception depended in large part on the notion of a Church divided into distinct orders, each with its peculiar role, and when he defended himself from moral criticism he appealed to ideals of duty specific to an individual's order.

Peter therefore had no great qualms about telling monks what to do. He wrote several letters of encouragement, urging various young men and women to enter the cloisters, but he also lectured them about their failings. On one occasion, an older friend who had been immersed in worldly cares vowed to enter a monastery only to develop cold feet, and the friend seems to have reminded Peter that he was in no hurry to take similar vows. Peter had no sympathy:

> You are angry with me, because I insistently push you toward a harsher way of life even as I have obstinately avoided and even fled it. But the fact is that my condition is different [*alia est conditio mea*], for never have I bound myself by the chain of any vow, and I judge you differently, because you solemnly uttered the vow of a holier way of life.[136]

Peter leaves no question as to his own place in the world, which is just that—in the world.

135. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia ad Guillelmi Abbati*, in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, 3:61–108; Peter the Venerable, *Epp.* 28 and 111, *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, 1:52–101 and 274–99.

136. *Ep.* 11, *PL* 207, 35. While MSS containing later compilations of Peter's letter collection include a slightly longer version of this letter, suggesting that Peter may have added to it later in his career, this passage is always present—for example, the early version in British Library MS Harley 325, f. 332v. For other MSS in this class, see also Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist," 131–32.

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Throughout his career, Peter corresponded and with and commented on monasteries, and it is clear that his conception of clerical duty depended largely on its difference from the monastic vocation. In the *Invectiva in depravatorem*, written in the late 1190s, he lashed out at a regular canon who dared to rebuke Peter for intellectual failures as a writer and moral transgressions as a *curialis*, and emphasized that most of that canon's failings stemmed from his shirking of monastic obligations. When he turns to defend his own conduct, he leans heavily on the distinction between secular clerics and monks, but also on the irrelevance of membership in a particular order to an individual's moral worth. His criticisms begin with the point that harsh words do not befit a pious man, especially not one who supposedly adheres to a rule. "Although I am a man of the flesh and sold as a slave to sin [Rom. 7:14], you are a regular canon, and a man of the spirit," and thus his adversary ought to heed scriptural prescriptions for mildness in correction.[137] Regular canonical vows carried with them clear standards for treating fellow men, and Peter here implies that his critic is bound by higher standards than he is. He returns to this line of reasoning when he remarks that as a secular cleric he expects that his writings, which he represents as being deficient only because of a certain holy naïveté, should be judged less harshly than those of a full-time contemplative. "With great cunning you have attacked the simple beginnings of my work, and the nascent infancy of my spiritual study, which I dedicated to Christ's service."[138] It is striking that, in order to achieve his rhetorical purpose of chastising the canon, Peter chose to juxtapose himself, a secular cleric and man of the flesh, with the canon, a monastic man of the spirit. Peter's self-defense builds on the recognition of a multiplicity of roles within the Church. The understanding, encompassed by the citation from Romans, that the soul cannot overcome its own sinfulness, becomes the backdrop for Peter's anxieties as a secular cleric. It is the cleric who is "sold as a slave to sin," not the regular canon. The dilemma of carnal man doomed to sin in this case applies, it would seem, primarily to those who, like Peter, were not shielded from the world's temptations. The clerical condition, then, carried with it an obligation to avoid concerns of the flesh that was far more difficult to fulfill. By Peter's reckoning, monks (and, by extension as far as Peter can tell, regular canons) lived under radically different conditions and avoided the clerical dilemma.

Next, Peter directly discusses the ways in which character, duty, and

137. "et ego quidem carnalis homo sum et venundatus sub peccato. Tu vero regularis canonicus, et spiritualis homo": *Invectiva*, 1113.

138. Ibid.

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ecclesiastical orders relate to one another. As he wards off the slanderer's attacks on his character, he argues that the canon in question violated his vow, presumably through moral depravity as well as through his penchant for slander. "You consider yourself a religious man, but there can be no holiness with a venomous tongue!"[139] He also justifies his own actions as a courtier and administrator. Peter categorically denies that he did or said anything that smacked of flattery or avarice at the royal court, and even claims that he did the work of God while attending kings and magnates.[140] This self-justification leads directly into a discussion of religious orders. Perhaps to avoid the accusation that his ad hominem attack on his critic arose from shameless clerical prejudice, Peter asserts that "I venerate with all the affection of my heart the life of the religious, of whom there are many types—for the tunic of Joseph has many colors [Gen. 37], and the bride of Christ is clothed round about with varieties [Ps. 44:14]—and I embrace their feet with the arms of most devout humility."[141] This entirely conventional imagery serves to frame the discussion in terms of the available forms of religious life.[142] By admitting the holiness of diverse orders and by extolling the virtues of all those who "fight for Christ" through ascetic practice and "in the embraces of the bride," Peter recalls an ideal—a traditional, monastic one at that—with which he can effectively contrast the behavior of his enemy.[143] In addition, the reference to the "embrace of the bride" suggests a familiarity with the ideas and imagery of contemporary monastic culture, especially of the Cistercian variety. The regular canon to whom Peter writes, however, has shunned the bride and the other delights of the regular life, and missed an opportunity to do the work of God, transforming himself from a "regular canon to an insular canon," alone, outside a community, and so altogether subversive of the harmony of the Church.[144] "Persevere to the end in the vocation into which you have been called," he warns.[145]

After thus carefully defining the boundaries of right behavior by invok-

139. *Invectiva*, 1114.

140. See above, chapter 4, notes 1 and 2.

141. "vitam religiosorum, quorum diversae sunt species (polymita est enim tunica Joseph, et circumamicta varietatibus sponsa Christi) tota corde affectione veneror, ipsorumque pedes brachiis devotissimae humilitatis amplector": *Invectiva*, 1116.

142. For other uses of such imagery, see Giles Constable, "The Diversity of Religious Life and the Acceptance of Religious Pluralism in the Twelfth Century," in *Culture and Spirituality in Medieval Europe* (Aldershot, U.K.: Variorum, 1996), esp. 38–47.

143. *Invectiva*, 1116.

144. "qui prius fueras canonicus regularis, factus es canonicus insularis": *Invectiva*, 1117. The term *insularis* may be a pun suggesting Peter's opponent was working in England.

145. "in ea vocatione, in qua vocatus es, finaliter persevera": *Invectiva*, 1119.

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ing the importance of the monastic calling and the coenobitical community, Peter moves on to the specific transgressions of his adversary. While his prior has "piled churches upon churches" under pretense of public welfare, the canon, far from being "dead to the world," has worked as an advocate in civil cases.[146] In the course of this last charge Peter employs language and allusions that he had used to describe his own defection from legal study at Bologna. The distinction between sacred and profane duties that caused him such trouble throughout his career now serves as the basis for a rhetorical assault on another wayward soul. In this case, he discusses the matter more subtly than in his debates over legal and curial service, as the discussion leads into an apology for the clerical condition, using the example of the sinful monks as proof that the neat distinction between monastic as holy and secular as filthy does not always hold true. After he has rebuked the canon for secular involvement, Peter speaks out against what he sees as monastic arrogance:

> You rebuke clerics for pleasures that I in fact find more among those who are spiritual men of Christ than among men of the flesh. I have known a great many who would find it harder to sin in their own chambers than you, perhaps, find it to sin in a church! It seems that you boast more in your half-stoles than a cleric bedecked in purple and fur. And humility bedecked in purple is better than pride mired in filth, and piety itself is the worship of God [Job 28:28]. Beware not to have merely the appearance of piety without this worship, lest you be counted among those against whom the Apostle said: "They have the appearance of piety, yet they renounce virtue" [2 Tim. 3:5]. What do you suppose is more sinful, the public declaration of one's sins, or the false pretence of sanctity? The habit and the tonsure do not take away the worm that eats at your conscience, for the kingdom of God is within you [Luke 17:21], not in the clothing worn outside you.[147]

This *apologia pro vita clericorum*, more than a little defensive in tone, emphatically denies that the distinction between monks and clerics necessarily implies a distinction in their respective levels of piety. Tapping into the twelfth-century current of invective against hypocritical ascetics and false humility leveled by Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter the Venerable, and many others, Peter downplays the moral value of mere membership in a regular order. His critique rests on an ideal of inner piety, of emphasizing the "inner man" as spiritually most important, and very explicitly employs this ideal to undercut general satire of monastic or clerical orders. In a legal context, Gratian had introduced the notion of *"duae sunt leges"*—

146. *Invectiva*, 1120.
147. *Invectiva*, 1121–22.

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there are two laws, private and public. Spiritual writers picked up on this notion to emphasize the importance of the "inner law," and by extension individual sanctity. In the *Invectiva* Peter invokes the notion of two laws, substituting interior and exterior for public and private, and rebukes his adversary for paying no attention to the *lex interior.*[148] Peter thus undercuts general criticism of clerics, and so complicates the role of orders in the Church. Orders allowed for a division of duties, and facilitated discussion of the various ways of serving the Church, but they could not by themselves account for inner piety. This is altogether consistent with Peter's general reluctance to make sweeping satirical judgments on whole orders; he instead focuses on the individual's morality and prosecution of his duties.

When discussing the inner man, Peter invoked patristic authorities that discuss the proper orientation for the individual soul, especially when, in considering the possibility of clerics being both wealthy and holy, he recalls the Augustinian distinction between using *(uti)* and enjoying *(frui)* worldly goods. Even the wealthiest clerics, then, can "possess many things as if they were nothing."[149] As additional support he quotes verbatim Gregory the Great's discussion of such use of goods when he compares a man using temporalities to a traveler resting on a couch, who "knows he is a pilgrim and a stranger in the world"[150] Appealing to this patristic notion of worldly existence as an exile or pilgrimage makes for a theologically sound, if somewhat disingenuous, means for Peter to justify clerical wealth through an indirect appeal to intentionalist ethics. While he claimed emphatically that he never flattered or sought influence at the court, on the matter of wealth he bypasses any protestations of poverty (which, as we know from the many financial complaints in his corpus, he would have thought perfectly legitimate) and focuses on the inner piety of those "bedecked in purple." A pious cleric, then, resists worldly cares with his mind while immersed in them; the implied argument, of course, which he hinted at earlier in the *Invectiva*, is that monks have a spiritually less strenuous path to salvation than men surrounded by worldly

148. "porro, cum duae sint leges, interior et exterior, licet tibi, et his qui tibi blandiuntur placeat singularitas tua, spiritus tamen veritatis, qui neminem palpat, et ipse est lex interior, quae te accusat et damnat": *Invectiva*, 1119. Cf. Gratian, *Decretum* 2.19.2.2, ed. Friedberg, 1: 839–40. For a discussion of the Gratian passage, as well as further notes, see Constable, *Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 262–64.

149. *Invectiva*, 1121.

150. "Sic temporali foventur subsidio, sicut in stabulo viator utitur lecto. Pausat ac festinat recedere, novit enim se esse peregrinum et hospitem super terram": Ibid. Cf. Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 8.92, ed. M. Adriaen, *CCCM* 143 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1979), 454.

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cares. Peter makes a similar point in Letter 102, declaring that "it shows greater grace to be religious among the worldly, to be just among the impious."[151] The *Invectiva* adds to this the notion that the addressee, as a regular canon, ought to find it easier than Peter to rebuke mildly and to avoid secular cares. After arguing that, despite the immersion of secular clerks in the world and their possession of secular goods, clerical piety can compare to that of monks, Peter moves on to general claims as to the value of all ecclesiastical groups. After all, one cannot turn the whole world into a monastery:

> It is not fitting for all to labor in the militia of the regulars. I believe indeed that it is of no less merit, outside the bond of religious profession and the hardship of necessity, to walk simply with God, to guard one's vessel in holiness and grace, and to keep one's hands from the filth of profit, than to refuse the burden imposed and struggle under the yoke of obedience. To have pure, unspoiled religion [James 1:27] is to keep oneself pure and away from the world, and to undertake works of mercy without cease. If you look to the sheepfold of Jacob, the net of Peter, or the house of our heavenly Father, you will find different sheep, different fish, and many different mansions. Noah, Daniel and Job all had a share in different aspects of the meritorious life. And, if Christ commended the repose of Mary, he was no less pleased with the work of Martha [Luke 10:38–42].[152]

By means of an impressive catalogue of metaphors for describing the parts of the Church, Peter appeals not only to ideals of pluralism and diversity within the Church, but to the importance of individual piety. Like the regular canon Philip of Harvengt, he drives a wedge between one's profession and one's sanctity, and he agrees with Philip's assessment that those who triumph in Babylon are nobler.[153] While Peter emphasizes the need to perform works of mercy, he does not advocate a "mixed life" like that of the regular canons who lived communally while seeking to edify others outside the cloister, but rather a secular life with a focus on living piously.

A comparison between Peter and Philip clearly demonstrates the labyrinthine twists of twelfth-century ecclesiastical rhetoric, for Peter used similar arguments in order to rebuke a man who, like Philip, was a regular canon. This passage appeared at a critical historical moment, when the multiplication of religious orders occasioned impassioned discussion

151. *Ep.* 102, *PL* 207, 322.
152. *Invectiva*, 1121.
153. Phillip of Harvengt, *De institutione clericorum*, 802, 817.

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of what the good life entailed. Peter attempted a middle course that accepted the values of the existing orders and glorified living piously and performing virtuous acts. As he did when outlining his program for episcopal duty, Peter arrived at a somewhat uneasy synthesis of the available spiritual options, just a decade before Francis of Assisi and his followers would disrupt the old order with a new model of piety and Christian service. The *Invectiva*'s invocation of Mary and Martha to represent contemplative and active is almost an afterthought, but certainly an effective way of using conventional allusions to support his argument. In addition to the bipartite model represented by Mary and Martha, Peter employed the tripartite model of Noah, Daniel, and Job (clerics, monks, and laymen), which in fact may have been better suited to his argument.

In the mid-twelfth century, the portrayal of Mary and Martha shifted somewhat to reflect a greater interest in the active life.[154] Elsewhere in his writings, especially in a letter to an excessively secular abbot of Reading, Peter himself, relying solely on the bipartite model, repeated the older notion that Mary in fact "had the best part," and that action was an unfortunate substitute for the glory of contemplation.[155] Replying to a critic of his life and morality, however, Peter emphasized the sanctity of Martha's active life. In the *Invectiva*, then, Peter's most impassioned defense of his life, work, and writings, the question of what was and what was not acceptable is clearly framed by the division of the clerical world into distinct orders and the duties required of individual clergy.

Although he defended seculars through appeals to an ideal of interiority, Peter always placed highest importance on the desirability of a plurality of orders within the Church. Because of the need for distinct elements of society, each with distinct obligations, Peter especially valued the monastic vow as entirely binding and inviolable. He frequently reminded monks of the obligations and restrictions imposed by their profession, as when he rebukes an abbot for excessive litigiousness in land disputes: "If you were carefully minding the vow of that profession by which you are bound, you would more actively procure those things which are from heaven, not those things which are on the earth."[156] Perhaps unrealistically, Peter regarded the monastic vow as incompatible with the expansion of a monastery's landed possessions. In general, however, Peter discusses the vow in terms of its strictly spiritual implications.

154. Constable, "The Interpretation of Mary and Martha," in *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 86–92.

155. *Ep.* 102, *PL* 207, 323.

156. *Ep.* 117, *PL* 207, 347.

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Despite his own lofty appraisal of the secular order, Peter had plenty to say in favor of monks and canons. In addition to making the conventional allusion to Joseph's multicolored tunic in the *Invectiva*, Peter claimed in a letter to the abbot of Evesham that God cares "not about the clothing, but the mind" of a monk.[157] Perhaps astutely, Peter flatly avoids taking a stand on the merits of different monastic practices, as when he declines "to presume to praise or rebuke manual labor by monks."[158] Forced to choose, however, Peter concedes that he holds the Cistercians and Carthusians in highest regard.[159] In an early letter he had told the prior of Cîteaux that he had read "the letters of your lord abbot," although he did not name precisely which abbot he has in mind.[160] That Peter possessed a certain reverence for the order of white monks is demonstrated by his allusions to Bernard of Clairvaux's works in his writings, as well as by his dependence on Aelred of Rievaulx for his own book on spiritual friendship.

Occasionally, professional considerations could mitigate Peter's reverence for the Cistercians. Sometime around 1180, Peter had written a letter strongly rebuking the abbot of Cîteaux for his order's claim to immunity from tithe paying. Although Richard of Dover was a Benedictine, he found monks more than a little difficult when it came to administrative matters, and it was in his name that Peter wrote the important Letter 82 to the abbot of Cîteaux on the subject of monastic exemptions from tithes.[161] That Richard should have sent this fascinating missive to a monastery so far out of his personal jurisdiction may reflect the importance of Cîteaux as head of the Cistercian order, and it also suggests close contact between the ecclesiastical institutions of France and England at the time. The letter seeks to balance respect for the Cistercians' well-known sanctity with profound annoyance at what Richard sees as the abbey's theft of food out of the mouths of clerics. Although he thus hints at the general criticism of Cistercians as avaricious, he avoids making it explicit, referring only to the "widespread grumbling" about the niggardly practices of the white monks.[162] The papal exemption ought no longer to apply to a wealthy order, and such an exemption is but a decree of man and "greater obedience is owed God than man." Peter then turns the

157. *Ep.* 97, *PL* 207, 304.

158. Ibid., 305.

159. Ibid., 97, 304.

160. *Ep.* 4, *PL* 207, 12.

161. For a discussion of this letter in the context of the history of monastic tithing, see Giles Constable, *Monastic Tithes from Their Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 292–94.

162. *Ep.* 82, *PL* 207, 253.

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matter into a question of individual conscience, once again echoing the clauses of Gratian's *Decretum* concerning public and private law, which had special relevance for monks:

> And although there are two laws, interior and exterior, the interior always takes precedence. What the purity of my inner conscience tells me is stronger than a command from without, and removes any indulgence of another's dispensation.[163]

Peter again appeals to the idea of interiority, here in order to resist the relatively common legal practice of exempting monasteries from episcopal visitation and tithes. Richard as an archbishop had compelling reasons for opposing such exemptions, and had in fact opposed them aggressively in the case of Battle Abbey.[164] Peter's letter illustrates how his professional situation and status as a secular cleric tempered his admiration for the Cistercians. His are perhaps strong words to place in the mouth of the archbishop of Canterbury. Appeal to human laws, he argues, ought not to exempt one from practicing the most basic virtues of humility and poverty. This is especially significant given the increasing importance (and quantity) of litigation at Rome involving monasteries. Peter's use of the idea of interiority, particularly since it represents a slight change in Gratian's wording from private to interior, reflects his suspicion that some monks hide behind custom and so abandon their ideals. Just as the regular canon of the *Invectiva* was accused of placing more emphasis on vestments than piety, so the monks of Cîteaux are charged with following human rather than divine statutes.

Apart from this letter, however, Peter has nothing but praise for the Cistercians. For the reason behind Peter's increasing reverence for the Cistercians we perhaps need look no further than the archiepiscopal curia at Canterbury, where Peter's employer from 1184–1190, Baldwin of Ford, wore the plain white wool of Cîteaux. It is in the years just prior to and after Baldwin's death that a shift toward spiritual concerns, including a change of heart on the matter of curial service, becomes evident in Peter's letter collection. Baldwin's monastic outlook certainly had a great effect on his policy while he was Peter's master. Much to the displeasure of the monks of Christ Church, Baldwin brought Cistercian ideals of discipline

163. "Cumque sint duae leges, exterior et interior, interior semper praejudicat, quodque puritas conscientiae dictat mihi, exteriori praecepto fortius est, et omnem indulgentiam alienae dispositionis evacuat": *Ep.* 82, 254. See *Decretum* 2.19.2.2, ed. Friedberg, 1:839–40.

164. *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey,* ed.and trans. Eleanor Searle (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 280–301.

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and obedience to his dealings with his Benedictine chapter, and this, in Peter's mind led directly to Baldwin's scheme to establish a secular college of clerks on the outskirts of Canterbury. Although his later letters portray Baldwin as something of a tragic figure, trapped between royal and ecclesiastical interests, Peter seems to have admired Baldwin's piety and wrote several letters in defense of his archbishop.[165] While Gerald of Wales zestfully quoted Pope Urban III calling Baldwin "a most fervent monk, an avid abbot, a tepid bishop, and a neglectful archbishop," Peter had nothing bad to say of Baldwin's administrative competence, and only praise for his spiritual qualities.[166]

Peter's professional need to deal with religious communities in other contexts also led him to contemplate the holiness of the Cistercians. As dean of Wolverhampton in the 1190s, Peter found his chapter of secular canons incurably corrupt and undisciplined, and determined, with the blessing of Archbishop Hubert, to replace them with a community of Cistercian monks. To that end, Peter went as far as resigning the deanery to prepare the way for the religious foundation. In a letter to Innocent III asking for the pope's support in this matter, Peter described the sins of his chapter, which he likened to a den of hyenas, and the reader might reasonably infer that Peter's campaign for the transformation of the church stems not a little from his failure to rectify the situation on his own. He offered his heart, mind, and soul for the edification of the canons, he claims, but "their contempt only grew under threats."[167] The Cistercians, however, could turn the church around. The land, with its streams, forests, and pastures, lent itself well, Peter argued, to Cistercian industry.[168] Both Innocent III and the general chapter of the Cistercian order supported the plan, which only collapsed after Hubert's death in 1205.[169] Again, Peter, gives the impression of acting as an ecclesiastical servant looking out for the interests of his superior, but he supports his plans with an admiration for Cistercians that appears elsewhere in his writings. Cistercians were potentially not only admirable monks, but conscientious landholders, and

165. See above, chapter 5.

166. "monacho ferventissimo, abbati calido, episcopo tepido, archiepiscopo remisso": Gerald of Wales, *Vita S. Remigii*, ed. James F. Dimock, RS 21.7 (London, 1877), 72.

167. *Later Letters*, no. 4, p. 27.

168. Ibid, no. 4, p. 29.

169. See Ralph of Coggeshall, *Chronicum Anglicanum*, ed. J. Stevenson, RS 66 (London, 1875), 160, and Revell's notes in *Later Letters*. It is not known whether King John approved of this plan to interfere with the running of a royal chapel. On the dispute, see J. H. Denton, *Royal Free Chapels, 1100–1300: A Constitutional Study* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1970), 41–44.

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as such attractive to the archbishop as well as to Peter. Peter's portrayal of the Cistercians (and other ecclesiastical groups) depended heavily on his professional situation, and took a number of turns throughout his career.

He also praised monks in two hagiographies, and in both cases patronage may have helped motivate his writing. According to Leland, a Peter of Blois wrote a *Life* of St. Wilfrid, the patron saint of the church of Ripon, where Peter was a canon, but the work, dedicated to Geoffrey Plantagenet, is lost.[170] Still extant is his *Vita Guthlaci*, which he dedicated to William de Longchamps's brother Henry, the abbot of Croyland. It is not difficult to understand the appeal Guthlac's story had for Peter. He left the pomp of the world behind and became an anchorite, forever repenting of his life in the *saeculum*. "Indeed, among those who are converted in their heart, the life of monks is much more secure; however, the condition of anchorites is far more perfect."[171] Like Peter, Guthlac became a priest later in life.[172] Perhaps predictably, Peter adapted much of the life from the ninth-century life of Guthlac by Felix, but Peter's letter of introduction demonstrates a clear veneration for his subject and for the value of hagiography in general.[173] While there is no reason to doubt Peter's sincerity, the life crystallizes many of the influences on Peter's spiritual writing: received notions of sanctity, anxiety over penitence, his position as a writer for powerful patrons, and his skill as a *compilator*.

Most of all, at least toward the end of his life, Peter relied on monks for their powers of intercession: they occupied a niche in society that he found essential for his own purposes, for his own salvation. Even as he coopted monastic ideals, he always wrote, as Ethel Higonnet shrewdly pointed out, as an outsider. His tolerance for different orders reflected his lack of interest in the issues that were so compelling to vigorous polemicists like Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter the Venerable, who argued so passionately on the respective merits of Cîteaux and Cluny.[174] But Peter was not entirely removed from the debate, and he used biblical exempla supporting diverse orders such as the "bride clothed round about in varieties" and Joseph's polychrome tunic that also appeared prominently in

170. John Leland, *De rebus Britannicis collectanea* (Oxford, 1775), 4:110. Bale referred to the author of this piece as "Petrus Ripponensis": John Bale, *Scriptorium illustrium Maioris Britanniae catalogus* (Basel, 1557–1559), 1:231–32. See Sharpe, *Handlist*, 422.

171. "Sane inter eos qui convertuntur ad cor, coenobitarum vita multo est securior; status vero anchoritarum longe perfectior": *Vita Sancti Guthlaci anchoritae*, in *Nova Legenda Anglie*, ed. Carl Horstman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), 702.

172. Ibid., 713.

173. On Felix's *Life*, see W. F. Bolton, "The Latin Revisions of Felix's *Vita Guthlaci*," *Mediaeval Studies* 21 (1959): 36–52.

174. Higonnet, "Spiritual Ideas," 226.

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Bernard's writings: this secular cleric knew well the rhetoric of those closest to the debates.[175] He had a stake in the delineation of proper monastic conduct not only as a result of his political and legal involvement with Benedictines and Cistercians, but also because he discussed his own place in the world in terms of the division of clerical society into regular and secular. In his *Invectiva*, he compared himself and other clerics to monks, and argued for the value of interior holiness and a diverse Church. Contemporary assumptions about the orders of society allowed him to justify his own career in the face of hostile criticism from his enemies.

Especially in the final decade of his life, however, Peter turned to monks in their role as intercessors, men pure in spirit who might pray for his soul and make up for his own sinfulness, which stemmed at least in part from his worldliness. As Peter looked around him and saw that his former lords and friends had died, he begged the monks of Meaux, different from him but joined in the body of the Church, to pray for him as he came to grips with his own mortality. The resulting request for spiritual aid includes an almost pathetic, but beautifully phrased, admission of his incapacity to effect his own salvation:

> In the world I live, and I follow the world, and it drags me down with it so that I can never be free from debates, quarrels, scandals, curses, or wicked thoughts. Indeed, he does not pray well who is troubled by so many things [Luke 10:41], whose thoughts are scattered and do not strive after that one thing that is necessary [Luke 10:42]. You, however, who are of one heart and one soul [Acts 4:32], pray for me according to the teaching of the apostle, raising pure hands to God without anger or debate. For He will give the good spirit to those who seek Him [Luke 11:13]; He will endow you with his spirit so that through you he might cleanse mine. Perhaps it will seem absurd to someone to pray for a secular cleric, but that same person will be pleased by such prayers; since, according to holy scripture, the end of prayer is better than the beginning [Eccles. 7:9], and if it lacks the grace by which God will take heed on my behalf, your prayer will nonetheless redound back into your own lap [Ps. 34:13].[176]

175. On Bernard's use of these images, see Constable, "Diversity of Religious Life," 42.

176. This important passage merits quotation at length: "In seculo sum et seculo sequor, immo trahit me secum, ut nunquam sim sine disceptationibus, sine iurgiis, sine scandalis, sine maledicitonibus, sine cogitationibus pravis. Sane non bene orat qui turbatur erga plurima, cuius cogitationes dissipatae sunt et ideo non tendunt ad illud unum quod est necessarium. Vos autem, quorum cor unum et anima una est, orate pro me iuxta doctrinam apostoli, levantes manus puras sine ira et disceptatione ad Deum. Ipse enim dat spiritum bonum petentibus se; ipse dat spiritum suum vobis, ut per vos sanet spiritum meum. Videbitur forte alicui absurdum orare pro clerico saeculari, sed eidem orandi assuetudo placebit, nam testimonio sacre scripture, melior est finis orationis quam principium; et si non habet gratiam ut pro me exaudiat deus, revertetur oratio vestra in sinum vestrum": *Later Letters*, no. 33, p. 169.

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Much in the manner of a dying king confessing his sinfulness to a chaplain, in seeking a mediator from another order, Peter invokes his secular status to suggest helplessness, and even implies, in anticipation of possible objections to his request, that he might seem by virtue of that status to be unworthy of sympathy. He throws himself upon the mercy of monks, that they might look out from the cloister at this old archdeacon terrified of the Last Judgment, and compensate for his earthly deficiencies as only they can. Indeed Peter writes as an outsider to the monastic milieu—this passage makes it only too explicit—but his treatment of the cloister as a significant aspect of the Church as a whole is not at all disinterested, as Higonnet indeed suggested. Not only did the monks, safe in their cloistered paradises-on-earth, represent an ideal of purity to which Peter could not aspire; they were, if they adhered to their vows, free from the anxieties that troubled the cleric in the world.

Peter of Blois did not want to be a monk and made no apology for it. He admired the Cistercians, worked with the Benedictines, and relied on regular clerics to pray for him, but he always threw his lot in with the world. In his own words, he "loved every order," but never publicly considered the cloister as a solution to his own anxieties about death and the propriety of his career choices. He remained instead a penitent cleric. His discussion of the monastic life often veils, very thinly, an exploration of his own dilemmas. The criticisms by the regular canon to whom Peter wrote the *Invectiva* inspired a meditation on the need for interior sanctity and the greater difficulty secular clerics had in acting piously in all situations. He never, however, in any of his writings, betrayed a longing for the cloistered life. He was a cleric from first to last, and the clerical dilemma brought with it changes of mind and feelings of penitence. Peter's achievement as a writer lies partly in his ability to display both this anxiety and this remorse. Because there were so many different kinds of cleric, it is difficult to identify a single author to represent the order as a kind of champion, in the same way that scholars can look to Anselm of Havelberg and Phillip of Harvengt for the attitudes of the Premonstratensians, Peter the Venerable or Rupert of Deutz for the Benedictines, or Bernard of Clairvaux for the Cistercians.[177] But Peter of Blois, in his writings about the monasteries, provides as clear a window as any other secular writer into the self-perception of men like himself. The monasteries became a foil for the paradoxes he faced, and provided a clearly defined ideal against which he could present his dilemmas.

177. See Constable, "Varieties of Religious Life," 47.

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Catholic University of America Press

Chapter Title: Epilogue

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma
Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century
Book Author(s): John D. Cotts
Published by: Catholic University of America Press. (2009)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.12

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Epilogue

One of the frustrating aspects of recent scholarship on the twelfth century is that it has placed so many expectations on its actors. Monks are expected to resist Scholasticism and write about charity, Scholastics to systematize everything, clerks to seek out bishoprics, and kings to centralize their bureaucracies, while the papacy moves inexorably toward the Fourth Lateran Council. The personnel involved play their roles with varying degrees of brilliance, and history moves forward even as the conservatives bitterly protest. It is an attractive narrative, especially when wedded to notions of "renaissance," and "reform" that grant it even greater significance for a dramatic reading of European history.[1] Peter of Blois frustrates many of these expectations, and that helps explain why he has been at best handled with care and at worst derided and dismissed. His method of compiling and borrowing somehow diminishes the power of the twelfth-century renaissance as a riposte to Burckhardt. His spirituality seems out of place in the world of the court, and his prevaricating about new intellectual options sometimes veers toward the reactionary.

While Peter's commentators have long pointed to his later popularity as a reason to take him seriously, what may be even more important is how embedded he was in the intellectual culture of his own age. His letters have too wide a reach, his influences are too foundational, his correspondents too important, to marginalize him as a witness. Many of the "contrary vectors" that Geoffrey Koziol attributed to twelfth-century culture in fact met in Peter's letter collection and motivated his changes to it.[2] He cuts across any neat

1. See William J. Bouwsma, "The Renaissance and the Drama of Western History," in *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 348–65.

2. Geoffrey Koziol, "England, France and the Problem of Sacrality in Twelfth-Century Ritual," in *Cultures of Power,* 125.

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rubrics one might want to impose on his milieu and emphatically, though implicitly, declares that it was every bit as confusing to be a courtly cleric as Walter Map, Gerald of Wales, and Nigel de Longchamps assure us that it was. Rivalry, confusion, and anxiety appear in all of the institutions he described: schools, cathedral chapters, and courts.

As a historical agent, then, Peter faced serious constraints, but his very status as a *clericus litteratus* allowed him to navigate his cultural world and to fashion a unique epistolary self through his writings. This epistolary self takes into account all the options he had for thought and expression and deploys them cleverly and strategically. What has struck some commentators as Peter's disingenuousness or plagiarism may in fact be a remarkably honest recognition of the clerical dilemma. His confession that "all my letters hung from another's judgment" is, after all, quite an honest thing to say. To meet the expectations of those doing the judging, he manipulated old tropes even as his manipulation of them revealed their instability. During Peter's lifetime, for example, Aristotle continued to be the icon for the liberal art of dialectic, as he did for the masons of Chartres Cathedral, but in the schools of Paris, Lincoln, and elsewhere he was becoming something else. Peter presented Aristotle primarily as a caricature, but quoted the *Topics* to some effect. Similarly, he absorbed the spirituality streaming from the recently developed monastic orders and attempted to use them for his own purposes.

In these ways Peter explored the possibilities open to the learned cleric as thoroughly as any of his contemporaries. Like the Martha of Luke's Gospel, who symbolized the secular clergy in contemporary rhetoric, Peter was "worried and fretted over many things."[3] The traditional historiographical teleology of a twelfth century marching steadily to Lateran IV, centralized government, the constitutions of Paris, and the *Summa theologiae* can obscure the fact that the outcome was not preordained and that there were no easy answers to most contemporary dilemmas. There still are not, but the foregoing study of Peter of Blois can bring to light a few instructive conclusions.

Peter's cantankerousness and transparent vanity have obscured what is often highly sensitive commentary on contemporary intellectual life. He was not a highly original speculative thinker, but it should not be taken for granted that he ever tried to be one. Although for modern readers his appropriation of earlier text detracts from the power of his writings,

3. For a subtle analysis of Martha in the history of Western anxiety, see Bouwsma, "Anxiety and the Formation of Early Modern Culture," in *A Usable Past*, 157–89, esp. 164.

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he presumably intended exactly the opposite effect. In a clerical culture that placed overwhelming importance on a relatively small body of texts, one could accomplish a great deal through shrewd use of biblical and patristic allusions. Peter's letter collection was a clerical conversation using such allusions as a kind of lingua Franca. In this way, he obscured some aspects of the historical Peter while simultaneously constructing an intriguing epistolary self from diverse sources.

This clerical conversation sheds light on twelfth-century culture in several ways. Peter's epistolary self reaches across institutional and national boundaries, and so reveals a dynamic and diverse intellectual culture where ideas could be shared and manipulated in new ways. While anyone who has read, say, Jocelin of Brokeland's *Chronicle* of Bury–St. Edmunds or Guibert of Nogent's account of Laon in his *Monodie*, knows how porous the twelfth-century cloister could be, Peter's letters fully integrate monks and their ideas into a broader clerical culture. Similarly, Peter blurs the line between systematic and symbolic methods by employing both and embracing neither wholeheartedly.

The letters and treatises also demonstrate the highly fluid nature of twelfth-century institutions. Although he clearly identifies some innovations, such as the king's marshals in Letter 14, he also subsumes his commentary on courts and schools within a broader eschatological framework. The schools could be a paradise, the court an inferno. The imagery tells us little about what those institutions actually were, and the unstable rhetoric reveals instability in the ways contemporaries understood them. The court in particular was not yet the arbiter of societal values that it would later become; men like Peter were still trying to be the arbiters. Sometimes they used outmoded ideas, but just as often they cleverly reworked received values into new contexts, with varying degrees of success.

Peter's reactions to the vicissitudes of his career intertwined with a clearly identifiable clerical spirituality that centered on penitence and a growing appreciation of the sacramental life and of the clergy's role in it. In this respect his work supports the usual teleology of the Fourth Lateran Council, which see it as enshrining the clerical monopoly on the keys to salvation and scriptural interpretation.[4] However, his focus on penance (which, perhaps fortunately for him, became definitively regarded as a repeatable sacrament during this period),[5] demonstrates how his piety

4. See Grundmann, *Religious Movements*, 58–67; and Moore, *First European Revolution*, 188–98, esp. 194.

5. See Mary C. Mansfield, *The Humiliation of Sinners: Public Penance in Thirteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 13.

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depended on the problems he faced in his career. This is illustrated dramatically by his confrontations with, but also his dependence on, monks. Their place in society secure, the monks begged pardon for their sins and those of others as a matter of liturgical routine. Clerks like Peter, on the other hand, represented a social group that fitted somewhat awkwardly into the established order. For them the monastic model of penance was not always applicable; while monks performed penance in their cloistered purgatories-on-earth, clerics found themselves face-to-face with an immanent and tangible *saeculum*. It would fall to Francis of Assisi and others in the thirteenth century to map out a clearer way to work in that *saeculum* piously.

Of course, not everyone found the clerical dilemma so troubling. Plenty of prominent members of the higher clergy in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries were blissfully untouched by the penitential impulse or by any other contemporary spiritual currents. One could begin the list with William Rufus's "chaplain," Ranulf Flambard, and continue with Rainald of Cologne, the patron of the Archpoet, or Hubert Walter, and go on to include any number of members of the royal bench under the Angevins. As Ralph Turner has argued, even the endowment of monastic foundations by prominent royalist ecclesiastics was more often political than penitential.[6] Their bad example, and the hostility they engendered in their critics, may only have heightened the anxiety of those more in tune with contemporary spiritual trends. Far from taking an uncompromising stance as an apologist for his order, Peter may well have sensed that there was a hint of truth in the joke that an archdeacon could not be saved. But he did not despair entirely of his condition, and recognized an ideal of service in the world. This ideal, moreover, depended on a keen perception of the value of learning and the written word, and their importance to contemporary culture. It is telling that when Peter wrote to Pope Innocent III about the Mass, he focused on its language: he was always a wordsmith at heart.

It was in words on the written and copied page that clerks like Peter confronted the clerical dilemma. While the written word had long been the repository of Scripture and a useful aid to memory, it was now a technology of power in the hands of ecclesiastical and royal administrations. As a result, Peter stands between two of the great themes of twelfth-century historiography: first, that the century saw the increasing

6. Ralph V. Turner, "Religious Patronage of Angevin Royal Administrators, *c.* 1170–1239," in *Judges, Administrators and the Common Law in Angevin England*, 137–58.

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consolidation of centralized royal administration, and second, that it witnessed a "renaissance" of thought and learning. On the first point, Peter illustrates contemporary skepticism toward the authority of that administration even as he benefited from it in many ways. On the second, he clearly demands that the notion of renaissance ought to be in some measure tempered. His dilemmas were profound and fundamental, and so he supports what has been called the "argument from grandeur" for the reality of a renaissance. However, through his despair at the very institutions that give the age much of its grandeur, and his ultimately pessimistic view of the *saeculum*, he could cause the twelfth century to fail the test of "self-definition" for a renaissance.[7]

A culture that had such room for doubt and uncertainty was certainly a rich one, and in some respects this richness, with its choices, fragmented Peter's ethical world.[8] The admiring scribes who copied his letters testified that he had some success in piecing together the fragments.

7. On both "grandeur" and "self-definition," see Jaeger, "Pessimism in the Twelfth-Century 'Renaissance,'" 1152–53.

8. The notion of fragmented ethics in the twelfth century is taken from R. W. Southern, "The Letters of Abelard and Heloise," in *Medieval Humanism*, 95, where it refers to the classical ethical tradition. See also Johann Huizinga, "John of Salisbury: A Pre-Gothic Mind," in *Men and Ideas*, 159–77.

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Catholic University of America Press

Chapter Title: Appendix: Problems in the Manuscript Tradition of the Letters of Peter of Blois

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma
Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century
Book Author(s): John D. Cotts
Published by: Catholic University of America Press. (2009)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.13

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Appendix

Problems in the Manuscript Tradition of the Letters of Peter of Blois

Peter of Blois' letters remain among the most challenging sources for twelfth-century history because of the instability and general difficulty of their textual history. The present study, for the convenience of both author and reader, has referred to the nineteenth-century edition in J.-P. Migne's *Patrologiae Latinae Cursus Completus* (which was based on that of J. A. Giles, not cited here also for convenience, since it is considerably less common than the *PL* in non-British libraries), when necessary referring to important manuscripts and past work on them by scholars.[1] In the preface to an edition of one of Peter's later treatises, R. B. C. Huygens neatly summarized the problems with the *Patrologia* version, complaining that it "manque presque totalement de méthode critique, elle fourmille d'inexactitudes, l'orthographe est arbitraire, pas d'apparat critique ni de relèvé des sources, indications tout à fait insuffisantes sur les manuscrites utilisés."[2] Moreover, the available editions, most of which can be traced to Goussainville's 1667 effort, obscure the evidence of Peter of Blois's own editorial work on his collection. Only a scholar familiar with recent textual studies and with some access to reliable manuscripts can read and interpret the letters with confidence. This appendix is offered to address concerns about the reliability of the available texts and to provide (1) a

1. J.-P. Migne, ed., *Petri Blesensis Opera Omnia,* Patrologia Latina, vol. 207 (Paris, 1855); J. A. Giles, ed., *Petri Blesensis Archidiaconi Opera Omnia* (London: Whittakeruni, 1846–1847). Both of these editions depend on that of Pierre de Goussainville, ed., *Petri Blesensis Opera Omnia* (Paris: Simeonis Piget, 1667 & 1672). There were three earlier editions of the correspondence: *Epistolae Petri Blesensis* (Brussells: Fratres Vitae Communis, ca. 1480), now available in the microfilm series Books Printed in the Low Countries before 1601, roll 330, item 3; Jacques Merlinus, ed., *Petri Blesensis Divinarum ac Humanarum Litterarum Viri ad Modum Copiosissimi Insignia Opera* (Paris, 1519); and Johannis Busaeus, ed., *Opera Petri Blesensis* (Mainz: J. Albini, 1600 & 1618).

2. R. B. C. Huygens, introduction to *Dialogus inter regem Henricum secundum et abbatem Bonevallis,* 377.

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clearer understanding of the problems surrounding the manuscripts, and (2) a methodological underpinning for a sensible reading of the letters' contents. To achieve these ends, it provides an overview of the past century of scholarship on the letters, followed by a summary of hypotheses about the development of Peter's collection, concluding with a brief set of practical conclusions to aid those who approach the letters while the promised edition is prepared for the *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* series.[3]

The Manuscripts and the Scholars

The long-awaited edition has been so long in coming mainly because the manuscripts present difficulties that at times seem insurmountable. Numerous textual variants appear throughout the entire corpus, and the extant copies vary greatly as to the order in which the letters appear, and as to their contents. Even a cursory survey of lists of extant manuscripts of the letters of Peter of Blois points to the author's great popularity in the later Middle Ages as at least part of the cause for confusion. Around three-hundred copies of the collection currently reside in the libraries of some sixteen European countries from Ireland to Russia,[4] and the dates suggest that the letters were continuously copied right up to the advent of the printing press, especially in Germany. Giles Constable has noted that later medieval mystical writers took an especial interest in Peter's oeuvre.[5] While the letters of his contemporaries like John of Salisbury languished in a handful of manuscripts, Peter's only grew in popularity throughout the Middle Ages. In this massive group of manuscripts one can find very few with identical contents and readings; past editors (most of whom were aware of not more than fifty or so manuscripts) tended to conflate all the possible readings of a given letter into a single, often awkward, piece, thus obscuring the fact that Peter significantly revised several letters.

Critical sifting of the letters, beginning with the work of E. S. Cohn in 1926, has shown that the manuscripts can be sorted into clearly distinguishable groups based on letter order, contents (the letters included in a given copy), and readings (the actual text of a given letter). It is now clear that, of the letters printed in the *Patrologia* edition (and the editions on which it is based), some are spurious, many formed part of the collection issued by Peter, and still others, though genuine, survived outside of the collections and were never actually incorporated into a collection during his lifetime. Some of this third type have been published, along with other letters discovered outside the main collection, by Elizabeth Revell as *The Later Letters of Peter of Blois* (1993). Most of these letters, whose manuscript tradition is relatively straightforward, date to

3. See Richard Sharpe, *A Handlist of Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540*, Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 418.

4. For a list of over two hundred known manuscripts, see Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 200–203.

5. Giles Constable, "The Popularity of Twelfth-Century Writers in the Late Middle Ages," 3–28.

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the final decade of Peter's life.[6] In what follows, the term "collection" refers to the letters that Peter issued and reissued together before around 1202–1205. It is these earlier letters that form the bulk of his literary output, and that pose unique problems to the historian.

All of the scholars who have studied Peter's letters closely tend to agree on how the manuscripts should be sorted into classes, but differ on the implications of the data. Many of the differences in their conclusions result from the diverging assumptions through which they have approached their research. Scholarly debate about the significance of the classes of extant manuscripts has turned on the simple problem of what these classes represent. Many have assumed that they indicate that Peter of Blois himself compiled his letters on more than one occasion, while some argue that the differences in the composition of manuscript classes usually stem from the work of scribes. These classes, then, have been referred to as "editions," "stages" in the development of the collection, "issues," "versions," and even as distinct "collections." The present study rejects the term "edition" as an anachronism, and I have settled upon "compilation" to describe instances of Peter collecting and circulating his letters. "Version" will refer to versions of single letters that contain different readings in different manuscripts (and which in all likelihood reflect revisions by Peter himself), and "variant" will refer to particular readings within individual letters.

In the 1926 article that inaugurated serious modern study of the collection, Cohn argued that the manuscripts can be divided into four main classes based on letter order and contents. He noted that these four classes included two pairs of similar groups of manuscripts, and contended that they represented two main "editions" of the letters produced by Peter, one compiled around 1186 and the other dating to no earlier than 1191. He claimed, that is to say, that Peter of Blois was himself responsible for producing distinct editions of the collection with differing orders, contents, and readings, and that the time frame within which he did so could be determined through the dates of the letters contained in each version. Although he conceded that there were serious complications within the tradition, Cohn could confidently declare that "the first edition of the first issue will be valuable spontaneous information; the second edition will give almost unique insight into the working of a very scholarly twelfth-century mind."[7] He thus recognized the potential historical interest of the revisions Peter made to his letters, and of the different letters Peter chose to circulate at various times.

In many respects continuing Cohn's work, R.W. Southern began studying the manuscripts in the 1930s, but did not publish his findings on the textual tradition of the main collection until 1970, when he appended a list of his manuscript groupings to an article on Peter's humanism. He agreed in principle with Cohn's method and interpretations, but he saw a greater number of man-

6. Revell, introduction to *Later Letters,* xv–xxiv.

7. E. S. Cohn, "The Manuscript Evidence for the Letters of Peter of Blois," *English Historical Review* 41 (1926): 58.

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uscripts and therefore significantly refined Cohn's theory. Like Cohn, Southern believed that the distinct groups into which the manuscripts could be divided demonstrated that Peter compiled and issued his letters several times between the 1180s and the 1200s. He posited seven groups of manuscripts in place of Cohn's four. Of these seven, one contains the later letters now available in Revell's edition of *The Later Letters of Peter of Blois*, another "illustrates a period of experiment with the texts," and five represent separate "main stages in the growth of the collection."[8] Southern dated these stages by using the date of the latest datable letter in each distinct group as the *terminus ante quem* for that group. This method yielded the conclusion that Peter of Blois compiled and circulated his main letter collection in 1184, c. 1189, c. 1196, c. 1198, and 1202. The interest of the stages for Southern went far beyond the role they could play in determining the proper text for any given letter. They confirmed his suspicion that the archdeacon of Bath was a vain and obsessive writer who niggled over every word he wrote. Discussing Peter the writer and reviser, Southern set the tone for subsequent work on the collection:

> He could never leave [his letters] alone. The briskness of the demand made it possible for him to bring out a succession of new editions. Between 1184 and 1189 he added a few letters, and he dropped some which now seemed unworthy of his literary greatness. Seven years later he added nearly forty new letters. . . .[9]

The collection, then, changed throughout Peter's career, and changed most radically between 1189 and 1196, when a large number of previously uncollected letters, and several revised versions of old letters, entered the collection. Peter continued to toy with the collection's contents until after the turn of the century, when he turned his attentions to other pursuits. Southern based all his work on the conviction that the convoluted textual history of the letters revealed a tortured and shifty literary personality.

Ethel Higonnet started from similar assumptions, and her 1973 Harvard dissertation largely corroborated Southern's findings. She modified some of Southern's classifications and added new ones, mainly because she viewed a greater number of manuscripts—199 to Southern's thirty-three.[10] She neatly outlined the fruits of her research in a classified list of these manuscripts, which divides them into a staggering twenty-one classes, to which she refers as "collections." Seven of these classes are taken to represent distinct collections compiled by Peter himself.[11] The seven stages in Peter's editorial activity are further divided into two main collections, each in turn divided into various stages, and an intermediate collection which Higonnet placed chronologically between them. The remainder include excerpts from the collection, manuscripts containing single

8. Southern, "A Twelfth-Century Humanist?" 131.

9. Ibid., 122; cf. Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 41.

10. Southern lists thirty-three different manuscripts in his 1970 article, though it should be assumed he eventually viewed others.

11. Higonnet, "Letters of Peter of Blois," 511–59.

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letters, and a large number of "contaminated" copies (manuscripts containing a conflation of more than one of Peter's own compilations). In addition, Higonnet's exhaustive appendices identified the spurious letters printed by Giles and Migne, as well as genuine letters that were never collected by Peter and which survived "accidentally."

Like Southern, she dated the collections using as a *terminus* the latest datable letter in each, and arrived at a similar scheme for dating them. Also following Southern, she believed that a fundamental change in the collection took place around 1196, when Peter added about forty new letters and significantly revised many more. The textual tradition, according to Higonnet, could reveal the key to Peter's "creative process," as she believed that Peter very self-consciously added and removed letters from the collection during his later career. All of her research supported her central point that Peter conceived of his collection as an organic whole which he revised with a view to changing its overall effect.[12] The German scholar Rolf Köhn (named by CCCM as the editor of the forthcoming edition), who wrote his dissertation on Peter of Blois at nearly the same time as Higonnet, similarly argued that the collection developed over time, but addressed the problem in only one published article.[13] By the beginning of the 1990s, then, a consensus had emerged in the published scholarship that Peter of Blois made several compilations (or editions, or versions, or stages) of his letter collection and that each such compilation contained a large number of variant readings. The changes in content, letter order, and readings among the manuscripts reflected the changing spiritual and political concerns of the author, and the changes took place either four (Southern and Köhn) or six (Higonnet) times after Peter initially compiled his collection, continuing until the first decade of the thirteenth century.

In 1993, however, a study by Lena Wahlgren called the method and conclusions of both Southern and Higonnet into question and argued that Peter compiled and circulated his main letter collection (which, she felt, actually consisted of two separate collections) only twice, while she admitted there was very ambiguous evidence for a possible third "intermediate collection."[14] Wahlgren's starting point differed from that of her predecessors in that she, as a literary critic and philologist rather than a historian, found the readings and

12. Markowski, "Writer and Reformer." In the cases of a few manuscript groups Markowski goes further than Higonnet. Though he devotes little space in his text to the manuscripts, his appendices posit ten "versions" of the collection, by which he seems to mean editions by Peter, including some that Higonnet felt were conflated "collections." Markowski (pp. 28–31) argued that a single manuscript, Chartres MS 208, may represent the earliest version issued by Peter, though Higonnet and Southern had not come to this conclusion. Rolf Köhn, who is editing the forthcoming edition of Peter's letters, agrees that Chartres 208 marks the earliest version of the collection. See Wollin, "Introduction" to *Petri Blesensis Carmina*, 75–76.

13. Köhn, "Autobiographie und Selbtstilierung," 696. Köhn's vision for the growth of the collection is outlined in the chart, based on his dissertation, provided by C. Wollin in his introduction to *Carmina*, 76.

14. Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 54–58, 61–62.

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variants of individual letters more significant than the overall shape of the collection and its development over the course of Peter's career. She assumed that manuscript variations in letter order, contents, and readings were usually the result of scribal alterations rather than Peter's editorial decisions. In addition, her stated purpose was not to speculate about the growth of the collection, but to use rigorous textual criticism to "fix the text" of the letters. This is a crucial distinction, as many of Southern and Higonnet's conclusions concerning Peter's personality and historical significance rested on the hypothesis that he produced several versions of his collection.

Wahlgren clearly believed that this focus on Peter's personality distracted from the more pressing issue of determining the best readings for any given letter. Beginning with computer sorting of manuscripts by letter order and the relative positions of individual letters, she identified groups of similar manuscripts almost identical to those of Higonnet, yet concluded that they could not be taken to represent "editions" by Peter. Only the main points of her argument can be noted here.

Wahlgren agreed with Southern and Higonnet that Peter made major changes to the collection in the mid-1190s, both by adding new letters and by revising old ones. However, she believed that this was the only major revision; she thus concluded that Peter of Blois issued two distinct letter collections (plus the "later letters," which are properly speaking not a collection) in his lifetime, and that what previous scholars had seen as intermediate stages were in fact the result of scribal "contamination" between the two main collections. Her method was to examine manuscripts for evidence of this sort of contamination, such as errors common to several manuscripts, and gradually to eliminate from the discussion manuscripts "contaminated" by scribal activity.

The crucial part of her published thesis is a collation of manuscript exemplars of five individual letters followed by preliminary editions of those letters.[15] The collation reveals that manuscripts containing versions of what Higonnet labeled "Collection 1B," a revised collection issued in 1189, share conjunctive errors with manuscripts of Higonnet's first collection, which, she argues, shows that Peter himself did not change the collection in the late 1180s. The same is true for the manuscript groups that Higonnet thought to be modifications made to the collection after 1196, which Wahlgren offers as evidence that Peter in fact did not revise the collection again after that point. Wahlgren furthermore questioned the validity of some of the individual "variants" identified by Higonnet and dismissed most of them on the grounds that closer inspection revealed them to be clear scribal errors or combinations of readings from the two main editions. As a general rule, Wahlgren's reasonable insistence that variations in, for example, scriptural citations, ought not be taken as hard evidence of authorial revisions led her to find fewer examples of Peter's editorial activity. Most important, despite a small amount of ambiguous evidence,

15. Ibid., 68–185.

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Wahlgren could not find more than two truly distinct versions for any given letter, and she found very few instances of even two versions. Thus she concluded that Peter compiled and circulated his letter collection only twice, first in 1184 or 1185, and then in 1200 or shortly after, at which time he significantly revised perhaps 12 letters, three of them sufficiently to alter their meaning, and added around forty.[16]

From the point of view of strict textual criticism, Wahlgren's argument is convincing, and especially valuable in helping to determine the best text of individual letters. Her admitted focus is on fixing the text, not on the growth of the collection. Believing scribes to be responsible both for variant readings and for the disparity in the number of letters in various manuscripts, she regarded the number of letters contained in a given manuscript as irrelevant to the question of Peter's editorial activity.[17] While understandable, this approach leaves a few questions unanswered. The evidence of shared conjunctive errors, which she uses to trace scribal interference, is compelling, but in itself does not fully discredit the possibility that Peter played a role in the collection's growth beyond issuing the two collections Wahlgren posits. It does not seem impossible that, while the texts of the individual letters stayed relatively constant (a point on which she is especially persuasive) Peter might have rearranged those fixed texts at different points in his career.

There seem to be three potential difficulties with her thesis. First, the number of manuscripts she considered (sixty-six) seems quite small given the hundreds of extant copies, and she did not examine many manuscripts not seen by Southern, Higonnet, or Cohn. On the other hand, the manuscripts she did view are quite representative of the general classifications that all scholars have noted. Second, like Southern, Wahlgren placed little importance on the dates of manuscripts, which may be relevant to the question of the number of compilations produced by Peter. Finally, her elimination of "impure" manuscripts from her final recommendations for edition may deprive the editor of high-quality readings for individual letters. In addition, Wahlgren's thesis has no convincing answer to the simple argument that the *termini* of the various "editions" that Southern and Higonnet posited are, as a general rule, sound, though she is sensibly concerned that some of the letters in the collection cannot be dated at all.[18] In general, her arguments relating to the text of particular letters need to be considered, for on balance, her textual criticism (as opposed to her consideration of the dates of letters as historical evidence) is more rigorous than that of her predecessors.

Although Wahlgren insisted that her method subjected this manuscript tradition to practices of solid textual criticism uncolored by consideration of the contents or assumptions about the way Peter of Blois worked, some of the reviews of her published thesis, especially those in journals devoted to philol-

16. Ibid., 187–91.
17. Ibid., 45–46, 60, 186–87.
18. Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 63–65.

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ogy, found her too willing to speculate about Peter's editorial method. Given that she explicitly set out to correct what she regarded as speculative excesses by Southern and Higonnet, this is somewhat ironic. Most reviewers seemed convinced (and relieved) that Wahlgren managed to pare down the number of Peter's compilations of his letters, but several argued that she did not go far enough. For Monika Azstalos, writing in *Speculum*, the sixty-six manuscripts viewed by Wahlgren did not represent a large enough sample. Reviewers were also troubled by the absence in the thesis of any attention to the dates of the manuscripts or their provenance. K. Bate, in the French journal *Latomus*, considered it far from established that Peter produced even two distinct collections, given the wide variation in order and contents among the manuscripts (citing Wahlgren's own acknowledgment that, of the 220 exemplars in her list, only two are exactly identical with respect to order and contents).[19]

Southern, writing nearly sixty years after his first article on Peter of Blois appeared, contributed a twelve-page review article in *The English Historical Review*. Not surprisingly, he reaffirmed his faith in his multiple-stage thesis, though he praised the quality of Wahlgren's textual criticism. His argument continued to hinge on his conviction that scholars need to see the collection as an ever-changing whole that Peter self-consciously added to with great frequency:

> . . . it is necessary to reassert that the letter-collection was looked on by Peter of Blois, and must be treated by an editor, as a single work of art in which the changing contents reflect the author's changing interests and orientation. Consequently the final purpose of a new edition of his letters is to provide material for tracing the intellectual and spiritual development of a highly articulate scholar . . .[20]

Southern's case, it should be noted, depends primarily on arguments relating to the contents of the letters and their relationship to Peter's biography, and rarely on textual or paleographical evidence.[21] He devoted several pages to a reconsideration of Letter 26's revisions and concluded that those revisions pointed to "wider changes in his state of mind and literary activities" that impinged on his compilation of the letter collection.[22]

Given that Köhn, who has posited that five manuscript groups represent compilations effected by Peter's initiative, has been selected to produce the new edition, it would seem that the multiple-edition thesis will carry the day and form the basis of the next century's work on the letter collection. But debate will presumably always rage around this collection, as suggested by Asztalos' 1994 *Speculum* review. Asztalos took issue with Wahlgren's "willingness to be overly generous in elevating scribal errors to the status of author's variants" and

19. K. Bate, review of Lena Wahlgren, *The Letter Collections of Peter of Blois: Studies in the Manuscript Tradition*, in *Latomus* 56 (1997): 652–53. See also the review by P. Bourgain in *Revue des etudes latines* 73 (1995): 273–74.

20. Southern, "Toward an Edition of Peter of Blois' Letter Collection," *English Historical Review* 110 (1995): 925–37.

21. Southern, "Toward an Edition," 936.

22. Ibid., 931.

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was frustrated by her tendency to be unclear as to whether a particular variant is in fact scribal or authorial. She concluded, based in part on what Wahlgren has since argued (convincingly) was a flawed interpretation of the two versions of Letter 30, that "it is impossible to reconstruct exactly Peter's letter collection either in its original or its revised form."[23] Most of these criticisms are quite salutary for the scholar of Peter of Blois, but at the end of the review a potentially limiting sort of textual positivism emerges:

> Cohn, Southern, Higonnet and now Wahlgren have spent a great deal of energy in producing hypotheses concerning the number of editions Peter of Blois prepared of his letter collection and concerning which manuscripts contain those hypothetical editions. In doing so they have, in my opinion, put the cart before the horse. Not until all of Peter's letters have been critically edited can any informed statement be made about his letter collection.[24]

While insistence on editorial rigor is quite sensible, this statement is at best impractical, and it seems prematurely dismissive of a great deal of careful and painstaking scholarship. Given the distinct groupings of the manuscripts that have been seen and the persuasiveness of the *termini* for "editions" posited by Southern and others, it is clear that the authorial process behind the letters cannot be entirely separated from their textual history. The theses of Southern, Higonnet, and Wahlgren were not based, as Asztalos implied, on sheer speculation, but on careful assessment of an incredibly large and ungainly mass of material. Moreover, it does not seem wise to focus on editing each letter without considering the larger collection, since the very notion of a "letter collection" is instructive from both a historical and a critical perspective. Letters circulated in collections, and the textual history of each letter thus needs to be considered in light of its position in a collection. The tools of the philologist and the intellectual historian are both required to make sense of this kind of source. A keen historical imagination must be brought to bear on such an intriguing and unstable textual tradition. It is possible to combine Southern's instincts for the implications of the manuscript tradition with Wahlgren's nuanced limiting of Peter's role in the shaping the texts of particular letters. Both approaches have done more good than harm.

Proposed Stages in the Development of the Collection

I have not attempted to reproduce the work of Southern, Higonnet, and Wahlgren so much as reanalyze it and make it digestible to scholars wishing to explore the content of Peter of Blois's writings. One striking aspect of all past work on Peter's manuscripts is how little it addresses the manuscripts themselves. That is, scholars have produced articles and theses with charts and lists detailing the contents and letter order found in various manuscripts, but they have generally

23. See above, chapter 2, notes 137–38.

24. Monika Asztalos, review of *The Letter Collections of Peter of Blois* by Lena Wahlgren, *Speculum* 69 (1994): 1295.

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approached the tradition as a puzzle or series of analytic exercises rather than encounters with fascinating medieval documents. The sections below provide an overview of the proposed stages in the growth of the collection with examples from manuscripts that essentially all scholars who have viewed them regard as representative. It is worth noting at the outset that I am not particularly confident that even a critical edition of Peter's letters will solve all the questions about his creative process. While there is ample evidence to support the thesis that Peter did revise and recompile his letters, the scribes, as will become clear below, asserted themselves as critical editors of the collection at a very early date.

Evidence for Earliest Compilation of the Letters

Scholars are all but unanimous that Peter of Blois first compiled and circulated his main letter collection around 1184, and made at least one (Wahlgren) or as many as five or six (Higonnet, Southern, Köhn) modifications after that. Their reasoning for positing an original compilation is straightforward enough: a core group of manuscripts contains around 96 letters and the epistolary tract *Instructio fidei*, all of which have a *terminus ante quem* of no later than 1184. These manuscripts almost uniformly include the shorter, unrevised versions of Letters 14, 26, and 30, and they include 150, the apology for Letter 14's attack on the royal court, which is absent from larger collections with later *termini*. Southern called this "Stage I" (in the development of the collection), dated it to 1184, and proposed the following contents (using the numbers assigned to the letters in *PL* 207):

1–15, 17, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32–56, 58–62, 65–75, 77–86, 88, 90–95, 101, 128, 130, 136, 150, 153–56, 158–59, 162–64, 173, and *Instructio fidei*.

Southern put great emphasis on a single manuscript, Chartres 208, as an exemplar of this initial stage in the collection. Although the Second World War claimed this manuscript in 1944, Southern had acquired photographs, which he would eventually share with Wahlgren. Cambridge Corpus Christi College Library MS 425, a very late manuscript (s. xv), has similar contents and letter order, but lacks Letters 79–86, 90–95, 128, and 164, as well as the treatise *Instructio fidei*. In lacking Letter 57, an important letter because it refers to Peter's poetry and usually concludes with the poem *Olim militaveram*, Chartres 208 and CCC 425 are unusual, since this piece appears in nearly all the manuscripts of the collection. One question remaining from Southern's work, then, is whether Peter initially produced a compilation of letters without Letter 57. Southern thought so, though Higonnet, who apparently never viewed a reproduction of Chartres 208, did not. In several manuscripts of Southern's Stage I (termed "First Collection A" by Higonnet), such as Paris Bibliotheque Nationale Latin 2957 (s. xiv), Letter 57 appears in the middle of the collection. In other manuscripts of later stages of the collection, it appears near the very end, as in the thirteenth-century British Library MSS Harley 325 and Cotton

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Vespasian E.xi and the fifteenth-century Harley 3684. At some point a scribe may well have added a version of Letter 57 to a manuscript related to Chartres 208 that lacked the letter. Whether this somewhat inconsistent pattern for the appearance of Letter 57 reflects Peter's own work compiling the collection, or the whim of a thirteenth-century scribe, cannot be determined with any certainty, but it is certainly plausible to suggest that Chartres 208 represents an initial stage of the collection. What is clear is that a core group of manuscripts contained a compilation of Peter's letters that can be dated on internal evidence to 1184. I leave open the possibility that Chartres 208 represents an initial compilation.

Still, the tradition of this first stage in the collection is not quite as neat as Southern's outline suggests. British Library MS Harley 3684, for example, appears in Southern's list of exemplars for his first stage, but this is a later manuscript whose scribe clearly had either multiple exemplars of the collection, or a longer manuscript, in front of him. The manuscript includes the letters associated with Stage I in much the same form, but it also contains, at the end, thirty-eight letters and one epistolary tract that are associated with later stages in the collection.[25]

Southern and Higonnet further argued that Peter changed the collection slightly in 1189, and to do so they relied on two main pieces of evidence: first, the group of manuscripts Southern found to constitute "Stage II" in the development of the collection generally includes six additional letters beyond those that appear in the "Stage I" group (*Epp.* 57 and 96–100), as well as the treatise *De peregrinatione*, written after 1187 and probably not until 1189; second, three letters drop out of the collection in these manuscripts: 14, 159, and 164. The change in contents may be significant, for the letters that drop out are the famous critique of the royal court (Letter 14) and a groveling whine to Bishop Henry of Bayeux (Letter 159). Letter 164 drops out, but in its place is a new letter on essentially the same subject, a defense of the character of the archbishop of Canterbury (Letter 100). In addition, of the six new letters, three are directly related to the administration of Archbishop Baldwin, for whom Peter worked in the years immediately following Richard of Dover's death in 1184. If Peter indeed added those letters along with the his exhortation for the Third Crusade, on which Baldwin would die, it would seem that he did indeed shape his collection to reflect his changing career circumstances. In this case, he called attention to his association with Baldwin while distancing himself from his earlier critique of the court.

British Library MS Harley 325 offers a fine version of this manuscript group. Nestled in a large volume containing the work of several of Peter's contemporaries are ninety-eight of Peter's letters and the treatises *Instructio fidei* and *De peregrinatione*.[26] The new "Baldwin letters" as well as *Ep.* 57 appear near

25. For the contents of this MS, see Walhgren, *Letter Collections*, 194.
26. Peter's writings are found at ff. 326r–376v.

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the end. This, of course, raises the possibility that a scribe added them from another exemplar after copying the contents of Southern's "Stage I." Moreover, Letters 96–100 do not appear together in all cases. Even in Harley 325, 96–98 appear consecutively, followed by the *Instructio,* Letter 57, and the Letters 99 and 100.[27] Wahlgren thus concluded that 99 and 100 were added in her "Second Collection," not as part of Peter's revision to his original collection. But several MSS do cluster these letters together, suggesting that they may have been added as a group, and the fact that they can be dated to the period immediately following Baldwin's succession makes it plausible that Peter reissued his collection in the late 1180s.

What is most rewarding about this group of manuscripts is the insight they offer into how medieval scribes worked. It may well be their shrewd awareness of the alternate versions of Peter's text that led to what Wahlgren termed "contamination." British Library Royal 8F vii (s. xiii, before 1250) is a case in point.[28] One of the most intriguing manuscripts of Peter's letters, it is a huge volume with nicely decorated capitals comprising only works by Peter, and an unusually large selection at that. Its scribe was probably French, though the manuscript found it way to Lesnes priory, in Kent, during the Middle Ages. Although the scribe clearly worked with a manuscript related to those in Southern's Stage II (the manuscript has the same contents as Harley 325 in only a slightly different order), he also had access to another copy. He copied the Stage II readings, but inserted marginal additions based on other readings throughout, and he added Peter's sermons *De transfiguratione Domini* and *De conversione Sancti Pauli,* his collection of sermons based on the liturgical year *(exhoratationes* in both the manuscript and Peter's own description of the work in the *Invectiva in depravatorem),* the *Compendium in Job,* and the *De peregrinatione.*

On folio 19r he copied Letter 26, Peter's account of his departure from Bologna, which, as was discussed above in chapter 3, the author revised by adding a passage at the end, to form a new version that Wahlgren has labeled "26B." The scribe of Royal 8F xvii added the key concluding passage from the "B" version into the margin, thus bringing his copy into agreement with what must have seemed like a more complete letter. Such evidence of scribal activity led Wahlgren to declare this manuscript "contaminated."[29] However, it represents a very complete collection of letters with early readings, and it contains relatively few errors. Because of its early date, the manuscript demonstrates that scribes were attempting, within a half-century of Peter's death, to determine the most complete form of his collection, and used multiple manuscripts to help them do so.

27. Ff. 371r–374r.

28. Wahlgren dates this MS to the fourteenth century, while Southern, Higonnet, and the BL catalogue date it to the thirteenth. I am grateful to Dr. Julian Harrison for helping me to corroborate the earlier date.

29. Wahlgren, *Letter Collections,* 46.

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Taken together, the evidence from the dates of the letters included in the manuscripts of Southern's "Stage II," the consistency with which those manuscripts omit the politically charged Letter 14, and the early date at which scribes were aware of multiple versions, it is reasonable to conclude that the addition of the "Baldwin letters" represents editorial activity undertaken by Peter himself (the case study of Letter 14 below will further address this problem). One can thus accept the conclusion of Southern and Higonnet that Peter of Blois reissued the collection within a few years of his original compilation of letters around 1184. Köhn dated the first reissue to 1185, and the only reason to insist on 1189 would be the inclusion of the call to the Third Crusade in *De peregrinatione*, which could not have been written prior to late 1188—the other letters relating to Baldwin's episcopacy could have been written in 1185.[30] However, two of the manuscripts Southern placed in this group exclude that treatise, so it cannot be accepted with certainly that scribes did not introduce it to the collection. The *De peregrinatione*, unlike the "Baldwin letters," did circulate outside of the letter collection.

In summary, Southern, Higonnet, Köhn, and Wahlgren have agreed that Peter compiled his letters in the 1180s, and have almost identical notions about which letters were included then. The letters compiled at this time included nos. 1–15, 17, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32–56, 58–62, 65–75, 77–86, 88, 90–101, 128, 130, 136, 150, 153–56, 158–59, 162–64, 173, and the treatise *Instructio fidei*. Wahlgren leaves 99 and 100 out of this group. The main debate is over whether Peter added 96–100 to a new compilation of the collection that also omitted the controversial Letter 14 and two others. The evidence from the *termini* in the compilations suggests that this was entirely possible.

Growth of the Collection in the 1190s

The manuscripts that contain letters that Peter clearly wrote after 1189 present an additional set of challenges. With few exceptions, these manuscripts include all the letters that Peter revised so as to change their meanings fundamentally, and the versions of individual letters often include new passages. Southern subdivided these manuscripts into three groups, which he argued represented Stages III, IV, and V in the development of the letter collection. Certainly the difference between these stages and Southern's Stage II is far greater than that between Stage I and Stage II. Wahlgren's research is most salutary in considering these differences, for she corroborated Southern and Higonnet's arguments that many new letters entered the tradition as a result of Peter's efforts during this decade. As discussed above, she went so far as to claim that, in the late 1190s, Peter essentially issued a second collection.

Using her computer sorting methods, Wahlgren identified approximately sixty letters that she believed were added to form Peter's second collection. With a few exceptions, these letters correspond closely to those which Southern

30. See again the chart in Wollin, introduction to *Carmina*, 76.

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and Higonnet believed entered the collection after the mid-1190s. Cohn, Southern, Higonnet, Wahlgren, and now Köhn all agree that large numbers of manuscripts contain versions of the letter collection that must have been compiled after at least 1195 and that contain significantly revised versions of at least three letters, along with other minor changes.

However, the evidence from some manuscripts is often contradictory and occasionally maddening. British Library MS Cotton Vespasian E. xi illustrates the difficulties nicely. For Higonnet, this manuscript represented an "Intermediate Collection" containing elements of the collection as produced in the 1180s along with elements of Peter's compilations of the 1190s. Southern grouped this manuscript with Oxford Oriel College MS 76 to form Stage III, and dated the stage to c. 1196. This version of the collection adds a significant number of letters as well as two of Peter's later, more spiritually minded tracts, *De confessione* and *De poenitentia*. Cotton Vespasian E. xi contains 137 letters and four tracts in all, and the first ninety or so letters appear in an order similar to that of the proposed earlier stages of the collection, but with the letters associated with the later versions of the collection interspersed throughout. Thus Letter 16 is inserted into the first third of the collection between 51 and 52, which were in similar positions in the manuscripts considered above. Near the end of the manuscript, the order resembles that of Harleian 325 (Southern's Group II) through its inclusion of 150, 90–98, *Instructio fidei*, 57, 99, 100, and 101, in that order. However, the Cotton Vespasian manuscript then contains Letter 14 in its revised version, which is somewhat incongruous insofar as it displays the unrevised versions of Letters 26 and 30. After 14, the manuscript concludes with letters 102–25, 131, 208, 214, and 242, all letters written after the compilation of the first versions of the collection.

Wahlgren, who generally attributed changes in letter order and contents to scribal contamination, acknowledged that the group represented by Cotton Vespasian E. xi might represent editorial activity by Peter. The fact that "core second issue" letters appear sprinkled throughout the manuscript rather than added at the end suggests that they were not simply tacked on by a scribe working from two different manuscripts. Wahlgren also found some minor variants to corroborate Higonnet's claim that Peter revised several letters at this stage, but in general found such variants trivial. The *terminus post quem* for this stage is around 1196. One can cautiously surmise that, although Peter revised the contents of only a few letters, he may well have had a role in compiling his collection again to incorporate letters from the 1190s. The evidence for multiple readings of individual letters is often ambiguous, and where it definitely exists, its implications are not entirely clear.

Southern's Stages IV and V (represented in Higonnet's list by three groups, Second Collections A, B, and C) present far fewer difficulties. Stage IV in particular is represented by good early manuscripts, including the gorgeous Cambridge Corpus Christi College 266 (s. xiii). Most of Peter's extant collected letters appear here, and the omissions make one suspect that the author had an

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agenda in leaving them out. One of Southern's most important claims was that Letter 150, Peter's apology for criticizing Henry II's *curiales,* dropped out of the collection at this time. With Henry gone, so goes the argument, Peter's praise of courtly life was no longer necessary. However, at least one of Southern's representative manuscripts, Cambridge University Library FF-v-46, does in fact include Letter 150, in much the same place in the collection as it does in exemplars of Southern's earlier stages (here, between Letters 88 and 90).[31] Southern's argument for this "Stage" must therefore be treated with great caution.

However, other trends identified by Southern seem more likely. Letters 128, 130, 136, and 173, all of which relate to the late 1160s and early 1170s, including his defunct friendship with Reginald of Salisbury, disappeared. In addition, Letters 126, 127, 133, and 135 allow for the dating of a revamping of the collection to 1198. Higonnet further divided this stage into two "collections," but her evidence was called into question by Wahlgren. The dating of the letters found in manuscripts of these groups, however, distinctly suggests Peter's hand in creating a compilation that took into account his work in the mid-1190s.

A final group of manuscripts, which Southern termed Stage V and Higonnet termed the Second Collection C, contain manuscripts whose latest datable letters were written around 1202–1205. For Southern, this represented the final stage in the development of the main collection. Among the letters Peter allegedly added at this stage are 151 and 152 to Innocent III, which would necessarily date this compilation to after 1198. Letter 150 is conspicuously absent. All of Southern's exemplars for this group are quite late, however, mostly from the fifteenth century. Once again, however, the *termini* provided by Southern and Higonnet do support their case. Köhn pushes this group back to after 1205. Wahlgren, however, correctly notes that individual letters do not change much in these last stages of the collection, so in terms of fixing the text of the collection, the differences between these later "Stages" may not be so important. The evidence of letters going in and out of the collection may suggest that Peter reworked the collection, but it is difficult to accept Southern's precise groups and dating.

Wahlgren's close textual analysis found clear evidence of rewritten passages in Letters 14, 26, 30, 65, 72, and 77, and clear evidence of added passages in 3, 7, 9, 11, 17, and 86.[32] Southern claimed that Letter 92 showed signs of a complicated textual history, but Wahgren could not corroborate this, and my own research has not revealed any major textual changes.[33] Throughout the collection there are examples of sentences with slightly different word order or added scriptural allusions, but many are of the sort that could easily be attributed to scribes, and if they could not, would provide few revelations into Peter's creative process. Moreover, none of these changes significantly alter the meaning of a given letter.

31. Higonnet corrected Southern by identifying this as an "anomalous" manuscript. See the list reproduced in Wahlgren, *Letter Collections,* 206.

32. Wahlgren, *Letter Collections,* 49–49.

33. See Southern, "Toward an Edition," 934, note 1.

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Again, in considering Peter's possible editorial activity on his letter collection during the 1190s, past scholars do agree on a key point: that the collection changed drastically during this period, and in three major ways. First, Peter added the following letters to the collection: nos. 16, 18, 20, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 63, 64, 76, 87, 89, 102–127, 131–35, 137–149, and 151–152. Second, Peter took the following letters out of the collection: nos. 128, 129, 130, 136, 153–165, 158–159, 162–64, and 173. Third, Peter revised the contents of several of the letters at this time, as will be discussed in the final section below, and in some cases the changes were major enough to change the fundamental meaning of the letter.

Case Study: The Revision of Letter 14 and the Growth of the Letter Collection

Letter 14 is Peter's most famous letter, and one of his most important. It is also one of the most interesting from a textual-historical point of view, because it was unquestionably revised by the author during his lifetime. This piece criticizes the worldly ambitions of clerics who serve at the royal court. The version that Peter collected and issued prior to the 1190s is decidedly milder in tone and more favorable to the king than the later version, while many manuscripts of the collection do not contain the letter at all.[34] Arguing that Peter issued an edition of his letter collection in 1189, Higonnet suggested that Letter 14 was omitted at that time for "political reasons" because it appears in no manuscripts of that supposed collection, which Higonnet calls the "First Collection B" and which Wahlgren considered just a scribal variation on the original collection.[35] It is perfectly reasonable to attribute the omission to political reasons since the letter contains a stinging critique of the court of Henry II, so stinging that Peter felt compelled to write a retraction, which he also included in the collection. Most of the manuscripts that omit Letter 14 do contain this retraction, Letter 150. Wahlgren speculated that Peter himself would not have included Letter 150 without the letter for which it apologizes: "Is it likely that Peter would omit the offending letter, yet keep the apology as a reminder?"[36] This is not an unreasonable suggestion, since Peter calls attention to his earlier sentiments by admitting that he had offended his colleagues in the past and so suggests that he expects his readers to know about the other letter. But it also seems possible that Peter, sensing himself in hot water (and at any rate knowing that his diatribe was already circulating), would have not wanted to subject his audience to the same attacks once again, even though he admitted having written them. In the absence of a precise stemma specifying the point when Letter 14 left the manuscript tradition, Wahlgren's argument must remain conjectural. Again, she considered all the manuscripts of Southern and Higonnet's earlier "stages" or "collections" to stem from one early collection by Peter of Blois. Of the twenty-

34. See above, chapter 4.
35. Higonnet, "Letters of Peter of Blois," 89; Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 54.
36. Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 54.

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seven complete manuscripts in Wahlgren's survey that she took to represent copies of the "first collection," ten do not contain Letter 14. This is a very high incidence, especially considering that four of these ten are quite early manuscripts from the thirteenth century.[37] Furthermore, in an additional seven manuscripts that contain the letter, it appears at the end of the collection, included in a series of letters taken from the later issues. In these cases, however, the letter appears in its revised form, suggesting that Peter's thoughts on the subject had changed significantly. Wahlgren recognized that this means that a scribe, working with two exempla, copied all the letters from one manuscript (representing Peter's first collection) and then added the additional ones from another (representing the second collection).[38] It may be significant that one of these manuscripts, Lambeth Palace MS 421, dates to the early thirteenth century.[39] This means there was an exemplum of the collection without Letter 14 at a very early point in the tradition. If Peter did not remove the letter from a version of the collection that he issued, why would a scribe have? Possibly length was a concern, but the unique political charge of the letter should be considered when discussing its textual history.[40] In the growth of the collection as outlined by Southern and Higonnet, Letter 14 is one of only two letters to have been removed from and later returned to the collection—its controversial character would make it a likely candidate for this kind of treatment.[41]

Practical Conclusions

The Authenticity of the Letters

Scholarship has concluded that Peter of Blois was the author of approximately 250 authentic letters, of which probably 163 appeared at one time or another in his main letter collection.[42] Most of the letters not compiled in the collection appear in Revell's edition of the later letters. The *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi* attributed to Benedict of Peterborough and the collection of *Epistolae Cantuarienses* both preserve letters that Peter chose not to collect.[43] Readers consulting the *Patrologia Latina* edition of Peter's letters should note that the letters

37. See Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 31; for precise contents and dates of the MSS in her study, see her appendix, 192–99.

38. Ibid., 55.

39. See M. R. James and Claude Jenkins, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 581–83; cf. Wahlgren, *Letter Collections*, 55. Again, I am grateful to Julian Harrison for helping to verify James's dating.

40. That length could account for a letter's omission was first suggested by Cohn, "The Manuscript Evidence," 53.

41. The other is Letter 150, but the textual evidence for this is uncertain. Wahlgren argued that this letter did not circulate in Peter's second collection. The manuscripts on which Southern bases his theory that Letter 150 circulated along with revised versions of Letter 14 are for the most part later manuscripts, and many are suspect in one way or another.

42. Türk proposes a total number of 251: *Pierre de Blois: Ambitions et remords sous les Plantagenêts*, 6.

43. *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, ed. William Stubbs, RS 49.2 (London, 1867), 15; *Epistolae Cantuarienses*, 107–08.

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printed there as *Epp.* 157, 160–61, 165–72, 174–207, 213, 215–26, 228, 231–34, and 237–38, are spurious.

The Proper Text of Individual Letters

The research of Wahlgren indicates that relatively few letters underwent large-scale changes as the result of editorial work by Peter of Blois himself. The best examples of such changes are Letters 14, 26, and 30. Wahlgren has also shown that no letter contains more than a single major change from an early version to a later version, and many of those changes are either trivial or can be reasonably attributed to scribal changes. In general, my citations, when they have deviated from the *PL*, have followed the versions of letters found in the later compilations of the collection, on the grounds that those contain the works as Peter produced them after revision. The present study for the most part accepts Wahlgren's conclusion that a great number of the minor differences between various manuscripts represent scribal variations. Even if some of these do suggest that Peter modified his collection, they are not textually significant. The *PL* edition tends to follow later compilations and to include any additional passages found in various manuscripts. I have used the earlier versions when their unrevised nature points to important developments in Peter's career and thought.

Peter's Role in the Process of Compiling and Issuing His Letter Collection

This has been for many the key question in considering the manuscript tradition of the letters of Peter of Blois. I here defer to Peter's own description of his work compiling and issuing his letters, which he included in Later Letter 9:

> After your departure, certain people asked me, on your behalf, that I entrust to them the letters I have already entrusted to others. So I sought out the most accurate copy and they sought out a scribe, and when he had received all the necessities and then wrote two or three quires incorrectly and disgracefully, he was taken off the job, and since then I have been able to find nobody save for forgers and workers of iniquity. I shall spare no effort, God willing, with your associates so that you might have the letters properly written. But you know that whenever the opportunity presents itself I freely write that which could serve the edification of others, as well as my own salvation. As Ovid writes: "I do not emend, for this is a greater task than writing," because our scribes are both few and mendacious. As a consolation for your patience I will send you, free of charge and from my sincere affection, certain other works of mine. . . .[44]

This passage serves primarily to denigrate scribes, a practice with rhetorical precedent in the letters of Bernard of Clairvaux, but it also carries implications for the discussion of the practice of issuing letter collections.[45] Wahlgren takes this passage as evidence that scribal errors entered the collection at a very

44. *Later Letters* no. 9, p. 51.
45. Constable, *Letters and Letter Collections*, 44.

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early stage and that Peter was at the mercy of scribes even before his death.[46] In this respect Peter's statements support Wahlgren's conclusion that he was not responsible for many of the variants in the manuscripts of his collection. The passage, however, suggests something else, namely, that the production of a letter collection could be an ad hoc process based on working copies in the author's possession. Though the textual evidence adduced by Wahlgren shows Peter of Blois made few major alterations to the text of his letters, we have no solid evidence that Peter did not modify the contents of the collections he circulated. Admittedly, this was not a concern of Wahlgren's, but it is germane to the study of textual practice in the Middle Ages that Peter of Blois may have issued different collections of letters at different times in his career. Southern interpreted this passage differently, believing it significant that Peter sent copies of other works in lieu of the letters. "The important point about this request, and his answer to it," he wrote, "is that the incident took place when Peter's interests had turned to theology and he was no longer making additions to his letter-collection. So . . . he is evidently now more interested in drawing attention to his recent theological works than in extending the circulation of his letters."[47] This strikes me as putting too much into Peter's mouth. He had written theological works at or before the time of the first compilation of the letter collection, and there is no indication from this later letter that he failed to produce a copy of the collection for his friend because of lack of interest. My sense is that Peter did not take the process of "making additions to his letter-collection" quite as seriously as Southern did. He circulated letters when they were available, adding ones that he had written recently and which presented material he felt relevant to his hoped-for readers. The omission of Letter 14 from Southern's hypothesized second compilation of 1185–1189 does suggest that Peter paid close attention to the contents of the collection, but textual evidence discussed by Wahlgren calls into question Southern's argument that Peter obsessed over every word. Southern argued that, because of Peter's obsession with his texts, a proper edition of the letter collection would require "perhaps five or six volumes," in order to trace every textual change Peter made. However, Wahlgren's suspicions that small-scale changes reflect scribal decisions seem well founded. Her criticisms of Southern and Higonnet on this point have been enhanced by R. B. C. Huygen's editorial work on Peter's crusading treatises. Southern had argued that in those works, particularly the *Passio Reginaldi*, Peter had added new spiritual quotations and corrected errors of attribution in old quotations. Huygens, however, pointed out that a close reading of all the relevant manuscripts showed that Peter had not corrected the errors, but that the nineteenth-century editors had. Huygens's response is worth quoting at length:

46. See also *Later Letters*, no. 23, pp. 116–17, where Peter asks that copies of his letters be returned so that he can correct scribal errors.

47. Southern, "Toward an Edition," 935.

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It is questionable whether the very busy Peter of Blois had the time or the inclination to revise his writings so thoroughly as Southern contends. We have too little critical evidence for us to support Southern on this point: in view of Peter's great productivity, this assumption seems to me to be more than questionable. Certainly he occasionally, for example in reorganizing his letters, made changes in places that for whatever reason struck him as needing attention. But the vast majority of differences can be attributed to the manuscript transmission, which was carried out over several hundred years.[48]

Careful reading of the "revisions" shows that Peter did not pick over his works as carefully as Southern suggested, and this is a highly realistic assessment of the influence of medieval scribes. However, this is, I think, a distinct question from that of the compilation of multiple versions of the collection in Peter's lifetime.

The most sensible conclusion to draw from the research of various scholars on the collection is that Peter of Blois probably did compile his letter collection on several occasions, but significantly altered the contents of just a few letters. I suggest that, rather than consciously and constantly devising multiple "editions" or "versions" of the collection, Peter kept working copies of a collection of letters that he compiled and circulated when opportunity arose or necessity dictated, and that he fundamentally altered the collection late in his career. The changes he made before and after this major overhaul are not textually significant, and are relatively minor as far as the makeup of the collection is concerned, but they may stem from Peter circulating slightly different combinations of letters on different occasions, or more likely, from scribal activity.

48. "Es fragt sich überhaupt, ob der allerwärts vielbeschäftigte Peter von Blois die Zeit oder die Neigung hatte, seine Schriften so gründlich zu revidieren, wie Southern es wahrhaben möchte. Wir verfügen noch über zu wenig kritisch Material, um Southern darin folgen zu können: angesichts Peters grosser Produktion scheint mir die Annahme mehr als fraglich zu sein. Gewiss hat er, etwa bei einer Neuordnung seiner Briefe, gelegentlich Änderungen vorgenommen an Stellen, die ihm aus irgendwelchem Grun aufgestossen sind. Aber die weithaus meisten Unterschiedne werden der handschriftlichen Überlieferung, welche sich ja über einige Jahrhunderte hinaus erstreckt, zuzuschreiben sein." Huygens, introduction to *Petri Blesensis Tractatus Duo*, 20.

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Chapter Title: Bibliography

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma

Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century

Book Author(s): John D. Cotts

Published by: Catholic University of America Press

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.14

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Catholic University of America Press

Chapter Title: Index

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma
Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century
Book Author(s): John D. Cotts
Published by: Catholic University of America Press. (2009)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.15

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Catholic University of America Press

Chapter Title: Back Matter

Book Title: The Clerical Dilemma
Book Subtitle: Peter of Blois and literate culture in the twelfth century
Book Author(s): John D. Cotts
Published by: Catholic University of America Press. (2009)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt284z96.16

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